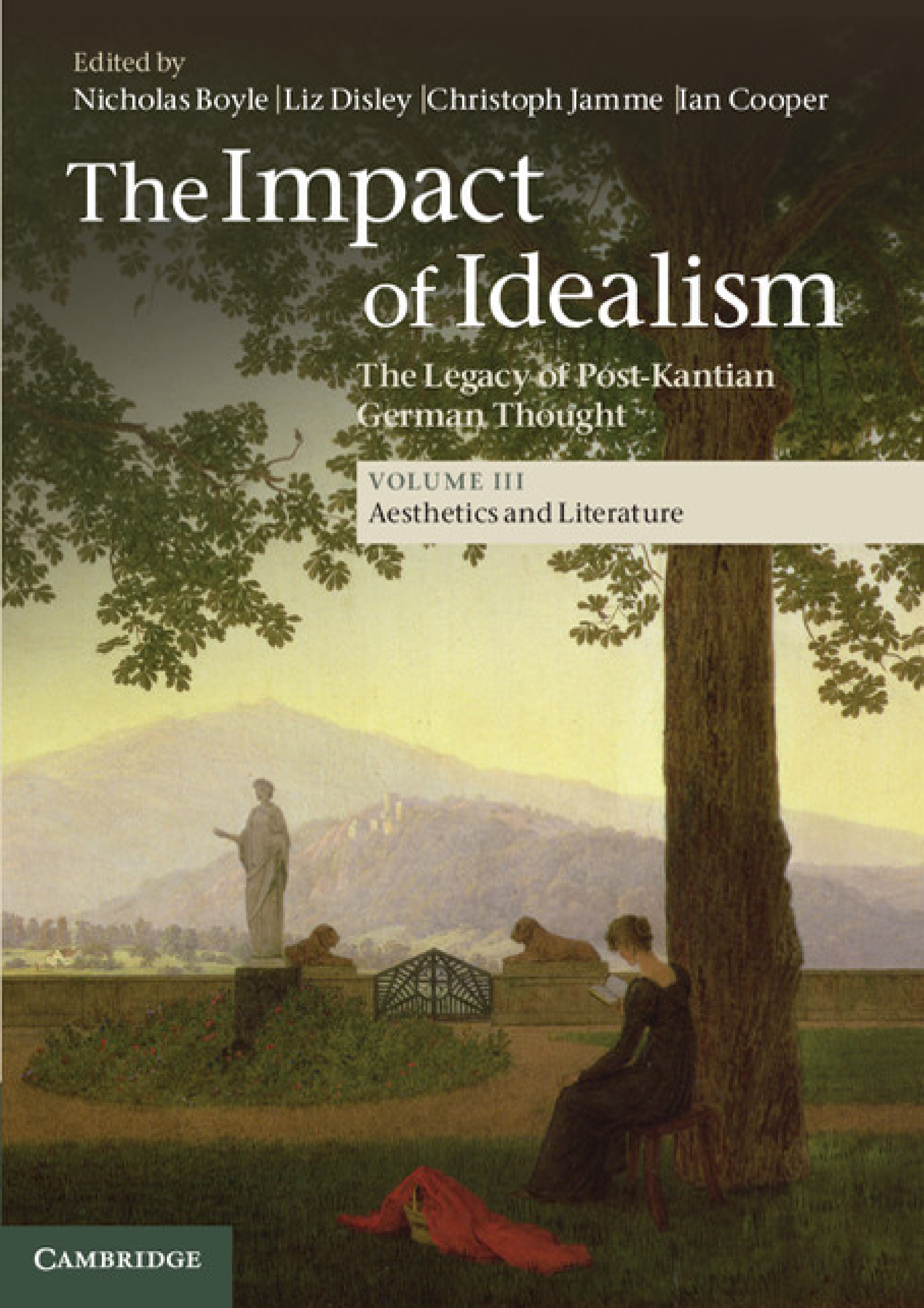

Edited by
Nicholas Boyle | Liz Disley | Christoph Jamme | Ian Cooper
The Impact of Idealism
The Legacy of Post-Kantian German Thought
VOLUME III
Aesthetics and Literature
CAMBRIDGE

# The Impact of Idealism

*Volume III. Aesthetics and Literature*

The first study of its kind, *The Impact of Idealism* assesses the impact of classical German philosophy on science, religion and culture. This volume explores German Idealism's impact on the literature, art and aesthetics of the last two centuries. Each essay focuses on the legacy of an idea or concept from the high point of German philosophy around 1800, tracing out its influence on the intervening period and its importance for contemporary discussions. As well as a broad geographical and historical range, including Greek tragedy, George Eliot, Thomas Mann and Samuel Beckett, and key musicians and artists such as Wagner, Andy Warhol and Frank Lloyd Wright, the volume's thematic focus is broad. Engaging closely with the key aesthetic texts of German Idealism, this collection uses examples from literature, music, art, architecture and museum studies to demonstrate Idealism's continuing influence.

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# The Impact of Idealism

*The Legacy of Post-Kantian German Thought*

*General editors* Nicholas Boyle and Liz Disley

*Associate general editor* Ian Cooper

Volume I. Philosophy and Natural Sciences
*Edited by* Karl Ameriks
Volume II. Historical, Social and Political Thought
*Edited by* John Walker
Volume III. Aesthetics and Literature
*Edited by* Christoph Jamme *and* Ian Cooper
Volume IV. Religion
*Edited by* Nicholas Adams

German Idealism is arguably the most influential force in philosophy over the past two hundred years. This major four-volume work is the first comprehensive survey of its impact on science, religion, sociology and the humanities, and brings together fifty-two leading scholars from across Europe and North America. Each essay discusses an idea or theme from Kant, Hegel, Schelling, Fichte, or another key figure, shows how this influenced a thinker or field of study in the subsequent two centuries, and how that influence is felt in contemporary thought. Crossing established scholarly divides, the volumes deal with fields as varied as feminism, architectural history, psychoanalysis, Christology and museum curation, and subjects as diverse as love, evolution, the public sphere, the art of Andy Warhol, the music-dramas of Wagner, the philosophy of Husserl, the novels of Jane Austen, the political thought of fascism and the foundations of international law.

# The Impact of Idealism

## The Legacy of Post-Kantian German Thought

VOLUME III
*Aesthetics and Literature*

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*General editors* Nicholas Boyle and Liz Disley

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Workshops met in Notre Dame, Lüneburg and Cambridge in 2010, and again in Lüneburg and Cambridge in 2011. A concluding plenary conference, open to the public, was held at Magdalene College, Cambridge, in September 2012. On all these occasions, staff and students at the host institutions provided help and advice, generously and often anonymously, and to them too we express our thanks.

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# *Abbreviations*

| | |
|---|---|
| Enc | G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols., Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969–71, vols. VIII, IX, X. |
| FSW | *Johann Gottlieb Fichte's sämmtliche Werke*, ed. I. H. Fichte, 8 vols., Berlin: Veit, 1845/6. Reprinted as vols. I–VIII, *Fichtes Werke*, 11 vols., Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971. |
| GS | *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, Ausgabe der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1900–. |
| GSD | R. Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, 2nd edn, 10 vols., Leipzig: Fritzsch, 1887. |
| GW | G. W. F. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, Kritische Ausgabe, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft in Verbindung mit der Rheinisch-westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften edn, 31 vols. to date, Hamburg: Meiner, 1968ff. |
| HKA | I. Kant, *Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Jörg Jantsen *et al.*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1976ff. |
| HW | G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols., Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969–71. |
| KG | F. Nietzsche, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe: Werke*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967ff. |
| KW | I. Kant, *Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel, Wiesbaden: Insel Verlag, 1956–62. |
| Nachlass | *Johann Gottlieb Fichte's nachgelassene Werke*, 3 vols., Bonn: Adolph-Marcus 1854/5. Reprinted as vols. IX–XI, *Fichtes Werke*, 11 vols., Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971. |

NW F. Nietzsche, *Werke in drei Bänden*, 3 vols., ed. Karl Schlechta, 3rd edn, Munich: Carl Hanser, 1965.

PhR G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols., Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969–71, vol. VII.

PKA G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie der Kunst oder Ästhetik*, ed. Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert and Bernadette Collenberg-Plotnikov, Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2004.

SpSW *Schopenhauer: Sämtliche Werke*, 7 vols., ed. Arthur Hübscher, 4th edn, Mannheim: Brockhaus, 1988.

SSW F. W. J. Schelling, *Schellings sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling, 14 vols., Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856–61.

VPK G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst*, ed. Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2003.

## Translations

Knox G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.

PA F. W. J. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, trans. Douglas W. Stott, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

PH G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree, New York: Dover Publications, 1956.

PS G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.

SL G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, ed. and trans. George di Giovanni, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

# *Introduction: Idealism in aesthetics and literature*

Ian Cooper

Two events occurring in the year 1916 might serve briefly to encapsulate the far-reaching and international bequest of German Idealism to aesthetics and literature. It was a year in which the work of writers and artists distilled an apocalyptic world-historical sense, and in Dublin Yeats saw a 'terrible beauty' born. A cabaret hall in Zurich gave birth to the artistic movement known as Dada, which sought to respond to the horrors of the First World War by tearing down the illusion of the unified ego that contemporary art – for all its cataclysmic expressionism – seemed to maintain. It did this by meeting negation, the desolate experience of history, with negation.[1] Dada issued from presuppositions that foretold its own ephemerality; but some of its more notorious products have not escaped a certain canonicity and, together with other subsequent movements and developments, it represents an apparent collapse of the distinction between art and non-art in the historical conditions of the twentieth century, which has seemed to call repeatedly for the application of philosophical terms formulated around a hundred years earlier.[2] Whether such manifestations are indeed the fulfilment of Hegel's prophecy for modern art is doubtful: they seem rather to express an 'indeterminate', or speculatively deficient, negation,[3] and the nature of such negations is the question pursued by one contributor to this volume. It is, however, beyond doubt that Idealist aesthetics continue to be an inescapable point of reference for addressing the meaning of art, and that – in common with all aspects of the German Idealist inheritance, as the other volumes comprising *The Impact of Idealism* show – the accounts of aesthetics present in German post-Kantian philosophy seem to supply an idiom for thinking about these matters that has not been surpassed in its conceptual power by the advent of postmodernity. The Idealist understanding of art as the sensuous appearance of freedom (that is, the substance of spirit) as beauty generates

a set of tensions that continue to define theoretical engagement with art. These include the Hegelian question of the 'end of art' as a mode of Absolute Spirit and the requirement for a philosophical, rather than a sensuous, grasp of freedom in the modern era; the relationship between (beautiful or ethically substantial) art, even when in Hegel's terms it is no longer the fully adequate expression of spirit, and kitsch: this question is a direct bequest of Idealism to Modernism and postmodernism which recurs in different forms from Dada to Adorno and subsequently in contemporary philosophers of culture moulded by German Idealism; the notion of art as appearance or disclosure – which is to say, with the most important philosophical heir to Idealism in the twentieth century, as a form of 'unconcealment'.

Also in 1916, T. S. Eliot, recently returned from the University of Marburg – which was shortly to contribute decisively to the impact of Idealism by appointing both Rudolf Bultmann and Martin Heidegger – completed his doctoral dissertation on a figure who, even then, was recognised as central to the variant of German Idealism that had grown up in Britain in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Its subject was 'Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley', and the conception of subjectivity it put forward – relational, dynamic, implicitly historical – underlies the shifting modes of Eliot's lyric sensibility from *The Waste Land* to *Four Quartets*. Eliot's work, with its philosophical foundations in a modified Hegelianism, is a major example of the transmission of conceptual structures originating in the German post-Kantian context to a much wider, and non-German, world of literature and ideas. These contemporaneous but rather different moments in the development of European Modernism – Dada, Eliot's encounter with Bradley – lay out between them two intersecting perspectives on the impact of German Idealism in aesthetics and literature, differing emphases of which the contributions to this volume share. One of these perspectives concerns the inheritance from German Idealism that allows us to place a figure such as Eliot in a direct line of descent from the original post-Kantian moment, and to examine that connection not primarily as one of influence but in terms of the way it opens our understanding of him to ideas and possibilities of interpretation that are foreclosed when the original moment is not considered seriously and on its own terms. The intersecting perspective, exemplified above with reference to the question of art, concerns the conceptual import of those possibilities of interpretation themselves: the ineluctable idiom of German Idealism as it inflects the way we speak about aesthetic questions, and as it repeatedly confronts us, in our encounter with aesthetic phenomena, with the entire array of themes to which Idealism

addressed itself in its attempt to give philosophical formulation to the character of modern life. The essays in this volume bear witness both to the historical vitality of the connections between German post-Kantian thinkers and major developments in the arts, and to the power of the internal dialectic of Idealist thought that unfolds as we reflect on what art is.

Christoph Jamme's opening essay on 'The Legacy of Idealism and the Rise of Academic Aesthetics' reconstructs the social, cultural and institutional dimension of Idealist aesthetics on the basis of an investigation into the ways in which the historical development of Idealism contributed to a new relationship between academic disciplines and indeed to a new understanding of cultural life. Hegel's notion of *Sittlichkeit*, or of the historical forms of life in which spirit is revealed at a particular moment of its self-realisation, shaped a variety of disciplines throughout the nineteenth century, and in the case of the developing area of art history this led to an institutionalisation of the Idealist 'cause of Art'. This process, which translated Hegel's speculative analysis of art as the sensuous manifestation of freedom into a template for cultural politics, certainly represents a diminishment of the conceptual sophistication with which Hegel treats art. But it also demonstrates the inextricable connection between the place of art in speculative philosophy – sensuous and immediate, and yet requiring sublation into realms of interiority – and the self-image of the nineteenth-century German public sphere as overseen by the *Bildungsbürger*. But it was Schelling, Jamme shows, who put forward a view of 'Art' as disclosing something to be presupposed by philosophy – namely, an absolute identity of freedom and nature – and therefore by all adequately grounded knowledge, and it was thus through Schelling that Idealist aesthetics became a foundational aspect of the modern German university.

The world of institutions, or of objective spirit, receives a different type of analysis in Klaus Vieweg's wide-ranging contribution. Here Hegel's aesthetics are illuminated by reference to his philosophical concept of action (*Handlung*). In the *Aesthetics*, Hegel characterises action in terms of the movement of the idea through particularity and self-difference and thence to self-resolution. Because this implies a relationship between the sociopolitical world and art as the sensuous manifestation of freedom, Hegel's philosophy of action is rooted in the relation of Objective and Absolute Spirit. Art – especially poetry and literature – provides figures within whom freedom is internally present as universality, even as their actions are particular and externally defined. Vieweg uses this insight, which is developed by Hegel not only in the *Aesthetics* but also in the *Philosophy of Right*, as a means of

discussing also the Hegelian conception of punishment in terms of a redress to heteronomous action that is immanently called for by heteronomy itself. The philosophy of action that is central to Hegel's aesthetics lays the basis, in Vieweg's analysis, for a powerfully contemporary theory of legal punishment grounded in speculative negation and a transformation of the oppositional workings of the understanding (*Verstand*). Vieweg examines the full implications of such a theory by returning to Hegel's account of punishment in ancient tragedy.

Tragedy is at the centre of Allen Speight's essay on 'The human image'. Speight is concerned with the legacy of German Idealism for understandings of the theory and practice of art, and here drama has an essential place: in Schelling's terms because it distils the essence of all art, and in Hegel's because drama has the unique ability, among the arts, to represent action or to instantiate art as an embodied practice. In pursuing these questions, Speight goes considerably beyond conventional analyses of the place of drama in Idealist aesthetics. He shows how for Hegel drama is 'presentational', which is to say it gives us the corporeal human form as the 'centre and content of true beauty and art'; there is, underlying the Hegelian account of drama, a theory of embodiment as the inalienable core of freedom's sensuous manifestation. Schelling shares this emphasis, but internalises it in his tragic understanding of the human being as capable of freedom and yet subject to necessity. This simultaneous connection and divergence in the views of Hegel and Schelling contributes to the related but differing ways in which they conceive the import of the human image in dramatic art. Speight goes on to analyze this philosophical relationship with reference to Idealist conceptions of genre and, finally, to the intertwined significance of the tragic and the comic: the real legacy of the Idealist – especially the Hegelian, performative – view of drama may reside in its furnishing a concept of the human as both genuinely tragic and self-veiling, barred from all forms of recognition that are not retrospective and fateful, and as an embodied acting subject whose modern fate is to exist as dynamic, ironic and unmasked.

This volume contains three essays that seek to define the significance of German Idealism in relation to a broad literary-historical context. The first of these is Stefan Matuschek's contribution on 'Romanticism as literary Idealism', which addresses some of the major precursors of post-Kantian aesthetics (especially Schiller, and Kant himself), as well as conceptions of art (such as Friedrich Schlegel's) which have traditionally been called 'Romantic', but which were developed in reaction to Idealist impulses (particularly from Fichte and Schelling) and continue to be seen as offering insightful,

and critical, perspectives on the Idealists' central claims. Matuschek shares with Allen Speight an interest in exploring his subject matter with reference to theories of genre, and shows how notions of the poetic developed around this time echo both in modern – especially post-structuralist – philosophy and in contemporary German literature. The next essay, by Ian Cooper, addresses the German literary tradition in order to trace the significance of the Idealist inheritance from the post-Kantian period to 1900. Cooper argues that German prose fiction (Georg Büchner, Thomas Mann), drama (Goethe, Friedrich Hebbel, Richard Wagner) and poetry (Hölderlin, Eduard Mörike) of the nineteenth century repeatedly intersect with the philosophical lineage inaugurated by Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and extending from David Friedrich Strauss, via Feuerbach, to Nietzsche.

The theme of Idealism in nineteenth-century literature is continued in Richard Eldridge's contribution, which shifts perspective to Britain and America. Eldridge's essay exemplifies the two approaches to Idealism's impact that were identified at the beginning of this introduction: he addresses both direct engagement, on the part of English-language writers, with German Idealist thinkers (Coleridge's reading of Kant, Fichte and Schelling; George Eliot's immersion in the thought of Strauss and Feuerbach; Carlyle's reading of Fichte) and the less tractable question of what he terms 'indirect engagement', or the presence in British and American literature of ideas definitively formulated by the German Idealists. This latter approach amounts to understanding German Idealism as articulating with unique and inescapable force the tensions of modern life (modern *Sittlichkeit*) as expressed in phenomena such as secularisation, urbanisation and commercialisation. In short, German Idealism is seen as providing the conceptual framework for what Charles Taylor terms the modern 'social imaginary'.[4] Eldridge unfolds this problematic through interpretations of major nineteenth-century authors who do not usually fall within the purview of scholars investigating Idealism. Jane Austen, Wordsworth, Dickens, Melville and Virginia Woolf, together with figures whose Idealist inheritance is more historically obvious – such as Emerson – are adduced in an argument that proceeds from Fichte and Hegel in order to discern in these literary writers an articulation of human values that cannot be conceived adequately without reference to the Idealist achievement.

Following these three essays treating the range of Idealism's significance for literary history, Ulrich Pothast focuses on the inheritance of Idealism in one of the twentieth-century's major writers, as manifest in their relation to a thinker who contributed to post-Kantian philosophy a metaphysics of

willing. Pothast examines the relevance of Schopenhauer for Samuel Beckett and demonstrates that this goes far beyond the matter of Beckett's (extensive and admiring) reception of Schopenhauer's thought. Reconstructing the central elements of Schopenhauer's philosophy and their importance for existentialist writing – the distinction between a phenomenal world and the underlying reality of the relentlessly striving will; the metaphysical primacy of art – Pothast elaborates a reading of Beckett's essay on Marcel Proust that draws out a Schopenhauerian ethic of suffering as a means of gaining access to the supremely non-individuated 'Idea' that is the true object of art. Beckett takes up Schopenhauer's emphasis on the idea, but replaces his metaphysical conception of timeless, abstract form with an account of the idea as manifesting instead the true and undistorted reality of a person's lived experience. Beckett, Pothast explains, proceeds analogously with Schopenhauer's general will, which is rendered non-transcendent. But despite Beckett's divergences from Schopenhauer, the Schopenhauerian account of human beings' earthly fate remains the most powerful means of conceiving the existential situation of Beckett's dramas, as Pothast shows with reference to *Endgame*. And the dramatic significance of Schopenhauer's implicitly absurdist variant on German Idealism may not, we may think, end with Beckett. Pothast's essay allows us to envisage the contours of an inheritance affecting Beckett's own heirs; this inheritance includes, for example, the violent and darkly comic aggression of the will characterising the theatre of Pinter.

Within the wide trajectory of German Idealist aesthetics, music has a special place by virtue of its being the art form that is non-representational: this is the reason both for its subordinate place in Hegel's analysis of the various arts, and for its subsequent elevation, in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche respectively, to expression of the universal will and origin of tragic drama. This volume contains two philosophical essays on the role of music in German Idealism. Both go beyond conventional patterns of genre analysis, including those bequeathed by the Idealists themselves, to uncover a deeper significance. In the first essay, Roger Scruton begins his account of music by examining the question of the subject as it is bequeathed by Kant. The human subject is not to be seen as just a privileged member of the world of objects, as it was by Descartes, but as a – 'transcendental' – point of view upon that world and, therefore, as existing on the edge of it. Scruton develops from this an ethical insight that he sees as underlying both post-Kantian philosophy and the experiential import of music. Each human object is also a subject addressing us from the transcendental horizon of the 'I', and in Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer there is increasing awareness that this is connected

to the power of music – all of subjectivity's relations to the other can be seen as a quest for the unattainable horizon from which the address of the other issues, and music expresses, for all these thinkers and in different ways, the yearning search for that transcendental origin. Infinite yearning is an intrinsic element of Schelling's thought as it was of Fichte's before him, and music in particular among the arts is seen as a potential way of repairing the primordial rupture of the integral subject. Hegel understands music as articulating the pure inwardness of subjectivity, but also as capturing the interrelation that characterises a world of persons even as it does not represent that world. Schopenhauer, in turn, makes music and its attendant yearning essential parts of his metaphysics of will. Through discussions of Beethoven, Schubert and Schoenberg, Scruton argues that German Idealism – when detached from some of its more overweening metaphysical ambitions – gives conceptual voice to the elusive complexity of inter-subjective encounter and affective life that music embodies. This voice, he suggests, has resonance for any contemporary attempt to understand what music does.

In the next essay, Andrew Bowie proceeds from the co-emergence of the work of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert with Kantian and post-Kantian thought, and asks whether German Idealism should be conceived of musically, which is to say as sharing with modern (post-1800) music a specific attempt to make sense of the world, and to 'make sense of making sense'. In both Romantic and Hegelian responses to Kant, reflection on language is introduced as a way of constituting freedom as essentially social. At the same time, reflection on language unleashes its own dialectic whereby what is lacking in verbal language also comes to the fore as an absence to be overcome; this is linked to a sense, expressed by Schelling, that language cannot be demarcated sufficiently from its own natural origins. The pre-eminence attained at this time by 'absolute' music – definitively that of Beethoven – lies for Bowie in its addressing this problem as articulated in the post-Kantian philosophical formulation of modern life. Bowie therefore understands music as woven into the self-understanding of Idealist thought, and he discusses the implications of a non-verbal, or pre-propositional, relation of self and world with reference both to the development of music since the Idealist period and to the claims of an analytic approach to music that, he argues, still has to grasp the insights of post-Kantianism adequately.

The essays on music are followed by another pairing, in which architecture is examined. These two contributions, by Felix Saure and Petra Lohmann, look at the historical relationship between Idealist thought and

architectural theory and practice. Saure's essay presents the Prussian architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel – whose work included the *Altes Museum* in Berlin – in the context of Idealist conceptions of architecture. He shows how Schinkel responded to ideas formulated by Fichte, sharing both Fichte's critique of, and vision for, the 'German nation'. For Schinkel as for Fichte, the Germans bear a task of renewal, and this task is world-historical rather than just German. Such renewal must be animated by the attempt to fuse one's own cultural sphere with what is other to it and to grasp this other in its authentic strangeness. Saure concludes his essay with an account of how these ideas and aims are reflected in Schinkel's design for the *Altes Museum*. The case of Fichte and Schinkel is then complemented in Lohmann's contribution by consideration of the intellectual relationship between Schelling and Leo von Klenze, whose prominence as an architect was equal in Bavaria to Schinkel's in Prussia. Lohmann shows how Klenze's architectural theory made extensive use of a concept of the organism derived from Schelling. In Klenze's sacral understanding of architecture, this meant relating the moments of autonomy, wholeness, permanence, truth and vitality to a concept of the Absolute, and Lohmann goes on to examine how, in the person of Klenze, nineteenth-century German architectural theory is based on a strong bequest from Idealist philosophy of religion. But Klenze was also concerned to modify a claim in aesthetics from Karl Philipp Moritz to Friedrich Schlegel, where 'organic' – or autonomous – status was generally ascribed to sculpture rather than to architecture. Klenze's engagement with Schelling, Lohmann shows, is part of an attempt to redefine the position of architecture within aesthetics.

Ivan Gaskell's contribution to the volume complements Saure and Lohmann by addressing the development of a particular cultural institution – the museum – in the context of Idealism's impact in the United States: this includes both the line of thought that entered American academic life through scientific followers of Schelling, and the role of transcendentalism. In the former category, Gaskell discusses primarily the work of Louis Agassiz, the Swiss natural scientist who came to Cambridge, Massachusetts via Munich – where he heard Schelling's lectures – and Paris. Agassiz's scientific approach was deeply influenced by Schelling, from whose thought he learned to apply precise observation of objects in a manner that is not detached from *a priori* principles – empirical data being reflective of ideal representations. Throughout his contribution, Gaskell is concerned with the development of an epistemology based on 'tangible things': physical objects that yield up a meaning – ultimately, a 'world' – rather than a dry

storehouse of paraphernalia that are available to our theoretical reflection but not disclosed in a context of felt involvement, or as what a later philosophical discourse, drawing on the same Idealist lineage as Agassiz, would call 'ready to hand'. He shows how such an epistemology underlay Agassiz's teaching and led to the founding of the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology. In the second part of his essay, Gaskell examines the treatment of tangible things by Henry David Thoreau, who developed the notion of 'world' beyond its Emersonian sense of that which is unified by an 'eternal law', and insisted instead on the singularity of *worlds*. Gaskell argues that Thoreau's conception of worlds as particular, non-encompassing constellations of meaningful objects, which points forward to twentieth-century philosophical ideas about 'world-making', rediscovered the Kantian core of transcendentalism, the insight that *the* world as a whole is not knowable by us. Furthermore, one expression of this insight is the prophetic subjective mode which characterises much of Thoreau's writing, and which captures the aspiration to a unified picture of nature, and the world, that lies always ahead of us.

Appropriately, the final essay in this volume deals with Hegel's theory of the 'end of art' with which this introduction began, and thus synthesises many of the conceptual questions addressed by the other contributors. Stephen Houlgate gives a full and suggestive account of Hegel's thesis – exploring its place within Hegel's understanding of art's historical development and, centrally, the role of beauty in Hegel's conception – before examining the influence of the theory on the work of a major twentieth-century philosopher of aesthetics, Arthur Danto. He shows how Danto's philosophy of art was inspired in large part by the work of Andy Warhol, specifically Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* in which the distinction between art and everyday life breaks down. Danto accounts philosophically for such works by saying that art gives us 'embodied meanings' – it invites us to discern an idea in a way which objects of utility do not, or poses a question about what distinguishes an art work from something which is not an art work. Danto's view of art, explicated in extensive analyses of Modernism, explicitly derives from Hegel the notion that art ends with the advent of its own philosophy, with conceptual reflection about the idea of art as produced in such works as Warhol's, where art and non-art merge and the task of answering the question 'what is art?' passes to philosophy. But, in an argument that complements some of the insights of Klaus Vieweg's contribution, Houlgate shows how Danto's assumption of Hegelian ideas is susceptible to Hegelian critique, because in the terms laid out by Hegel it remains in the realm of the

understanding (*Verstand*), where negation is merely 'abstract' or 'external', rather than progressing to a properly speculative grasping of opposition in unity. Houlgate develops the Hegelian implications of this with reference to the philosophical 'essence' of art – art's essence being to *appear* or *show itself* – concluding that Hegel's account does not sanction Danto's view of art as no longer revealing itself, to the senses, as art. In arguing against reductive readings of Hegel's thesis, this concluding essay makes a strong claim not only for the relevance of Idealist aesthetics for modern art, but also for the continuing role of art – as long as it concerns itself with the elevated and prosaic dignity of human life that Hegel identified with the beautiful – in manifesting what is really important in modern, self-conscious existence as German Idealism defined it.

## Notes

1. See Michael Minden, *Modern German Literature* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), 117.
2. See Robert B. Pippin, 'What was Abstract Art? (From the point of view of Hegel)', in R. B. Pippin, *The Persistence of Subjectivity: on the Kantian aftermath* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 279–306.
3. *Ibid.*, 283.
4. See Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

1

# The legacy of Idealism and the rise of academic aesthetics

Christoph Jamme

## I.

To speak of 'the legacy of Idealism' is to combine two terms neither of which is unproblematic. The term 'legacy' was long compromised through discussion within the GDR of the maintenance of its cultural traditions; but these days it seems, particularly in a philosophical context, that once more it can be used in a fairly unembarrassed way (as is shown for example by *Hegels Erbe* (*Hegel's Legacy*), the book of essays edited by Halbig, Quante and Siep in 2004). My concern here will not be with the reconstruction of the influence of individual thinkers, but with their connections with one another, with the intellectual force field to which Dieter Henrich has given the name 'constellations' (*Konstellationen*).[1] Within a very short time, in the two decades at the end of the eighteenth century, the structure of speculative Idealism arose. It shaped intellectual history and even today it sets a benchmark for philosophical thought – comparable only with what was achieved in the classical period of Athens and Florence. According to Rüdiger Bubner, in the introduction to *Innovationen des Idealismus* (1995, published in English as *The Innovations of Idealism*, 2003), we have today become accustomed

> to seeing German Idealism as more than simply a particularly inspiring period in the history of philosophy. And despite increasing chronological distance, we regard idealism as exemplary because of its quick awareness of problems, intensive movements of ideas and prudent, which is to say, undogmatic formation of a political rationality.[a,2]

a. 'Im deutschen Idealismus mehr zu sehen als ein besonders anregendes Kapitel der Philosophiegeschichte . . . Auch noch in wachsender Distanz betrachten wir den Idealismus als

Yet despite all the sustained interest in this philosophical epoch, it remains enormously difficult to agree what constitutes German Idealism at its core. Historically we have become accustomed to distinguish two phases of development: the critical phase and the speculative phase that followed it. But it is frequently pointed out, *inter alia* in Walter Jaeschke's inaugural lecture, that talk of 'German Idealism' is, for various reasons, not suited to be the name of an epoch, and that, in contrast, it would be preferable to speak of 'classical German philosophy'.[b] To repeat just one of these objections here, then, the formulation 'German Idealism' is appropriate only to a small fraction of the innovations of this epoch that are generally put under this heading, and it conceals contemporary approaches (such as early Romanticism), which were no less constitutive of the development of philosophy at the time than the stirrings intrinsic to the so-called Idealist philosophies. But even in this case the question of whether there is a unified concept remains singularly difficult. One could assert that classical German philosophy has two cornerstones, namely, the function of subjectivity in grounding knowledge (transcendental philosophy) and the equation of ego and reason (in the identity philosophy of Schelling and Hegel). It is about the self-explication of reason in systematic form. But German Idealism is *also* about attempts to link the provision of an ultimate rational ground with the practical orientation of life and with an awareness of the limits of the thinking that provides the grounds. That philosophy engages not only with questions of systematic knowledge, but equally concerns itself with life's urgent questions, is characteristic of the western philosophical tradition from its Greek beginnings. In recent thought a comprehensive orientation towards problems of living is decisive in particular for the philosophy that began with Kant. However, it is not simply specific connections between life and thought that are of interest here, but above all the general question of the *relationship* between life and philosophy. In other words, classical German philosophy is of special interest today because of its meta-philosophical reflections and because of those reflections that assume an intrinsic connection between life and the practice of philosophy.[3] (It is not a coincidence that Schleiermacher's 'theory of social behaviour' has recently been rediscovered.) Dieter Henrich has pointed out several times that attempts at a philosophical system have often

exemplarisch für ein sich schnell steigerndes Problembewusstsein, für intensivierte Gedankenbewegung und umsichtige, also nicht dogmatische Ausbildung eines Rationalitätsmaßstabs.' Rüdiger Bubner, *Innovationen des Idealismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 5 [trans. MB].

b. 'klassischen deutschen Philosophie'. Walter Jaeschke, 'Der Philosophiebegriff der klassischen deutschen Philosophie', Antrittsvorlesung an der Ruhr-Universität Bochum, 1999.

been formulated out of other than purely theoretical interests, and, conversely, that German Idealism transformed matters of life and death into a *theoretical* task. Hölderlin spoke quite deliberately of the 'separations within which we think *and exist*'.[c] There are even real-life foundations for logic, as Rüdiger Bubner has shown, siding with Aristotle against Hegel.

The problem of definition, though, remains. We do not know what 'Idealism' means, nor is it clear who the German Idealists are. If we follow two recent collective volumes on German Idealism, namely, Karl Ameriks, *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* (2000) and Hans Jörg Sandkühler, *Handbuch Deutscher Idealismus* (2005), we see that both editors emphasise that a single concept of German Idealism is highly problematic, and both are therefore also very cautious about defining Idealism. There is, in fact, merely a general consensus that the term refers to four central thinkers, namely Kant, Fichte, Schelling (in his early work) and Hegel. But even if we restrict German Idealism to these four paradigmatic figures, it would still appear that there is no univocal sense in which all four were Idealists. Perhaps, indeed, there is no individual and unified meaning of Idealism, but, as Frederick Beiser has suggested, only two antithetical forms of Idealism, which, it appears, simply share a name.[4] What is meant here is the familiar fact that in 1800/1, Schelling and Hegel formed an alliance in order to defend their own concept of an objective, or absolute, Idealism in contrast to the subjective Idealism of Kant and Fichte. The problem, however, was then complicated by the fact that in 1800/1, at the high-point of their dispute with the Kantian–Fichtian legacy, Schelling and Hegel themselves believed that there was a univocal sense in which they were all Idealists. Despite their vehement polemic against Kant and Fichte, they nevertheless professed their loyalty to what they recognised as the basic principle of Kantian and Fichtian Idealism – what they called the principle of subject–object identity. In 1801, this principle of subject–object identity functioned crucially for Schelling and Hegel as the explanation of their monism. It served as a sign of protest against all forms of pluralism, whether Kantian, Fichtian or Cartesian. As followers of Spinoza, they assumed that the subjective and the objective, or the ideal and the real, are not distinct substances, but simply different aspects or attributes of one and the same substance.

It is precisely because of this monism, because of a profound opposition to the dualism and mechanism of Cartesianism (which, for example,

c. 'Trennungen, in denen wir denken *und existieren*', Hölderlin to Niethammer, 24 February 1796, Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke: große Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, ed. F. Beißner and A. Beck (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1943–85), vi, 219.

resulted in a different concept of nature, understood not as a mechanism, but as an organism), that German Idealism has come to be perceived as closer to the thought of our time than had often been assumed. It is surely indisputable that most philosophical trends of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were counter-movements opposed to German Idealism. Admittedly, the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (edited by Ted Honderich) magisterially decrees that, with Hegel's death in 1831, 'the period of German Idealism, which has no parallel elsewhere, came to [an] end'.[5] The rise of the natural sciences is said to have awoken a mistrust of philosophical systems and promoted naturalism and materialism. Man was no longer seen primarily as a rational being, but as a biological creature. Nevertheless, there are many good reasons to moderate the sharp division traditionally perceived between Idealism and post-Idealism; if one opens up German Idealism, or 'classical German philosophy', to include, for example, the early Romanticism of Hölderlin, Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel and Schleiermacher,[6] the lines can easily be traced from Schlegel and Schleiermacher to, for instance, Martin Heidegger, in whom we can find a conception of the connection between the practice of philosophy and the life of man, which – despite certain tendencies in contemporary thought, foremost in the work of Emil Lask – is paralleled only within German Idealism. (I am referring to Heidegger's early Freiburg lectures of 1919–23 in which Heidegger was concerned to show that philosophy, and particularly philosophy as phenomenology, arises from a pre-theoretical, pre-philosophical understanding – and thus from life itself.[7])

## II.

In my attempt to investigate the legacy of Idealism (however problematic the term 'German Idealism' may be), I am not concerned with its legacy to contemporary philosophy or its past contribution; I am interested not in the demonstration of its intra-philosophical influence (such as in neo-Kantianism), but in the influence of classical German philosophy on extra-philosophical fields of knowledge and science – a project that has not yet been attempted systematically (for example, Hegel's impact has never been reappraised in its overall, European, context). Here I am not concerned with such generally better-known issues in reception history as Marxism or the much-discussed problem 'From Hegel to Hitler', but with the question of the ways in which German Idealism affected the scholarship of its time or contributed to the emergence of new disciplines or, perhaps most

importantly, which cultural institutions were first envisioned under its influence (here the perspectives of philosophy, cultural studies and cultural history converge).

By way of example, let me mention certain of these fields of activity, concentrating on Hegel because the specific influences of his philosophy can be reconstructed particularly clearly. Perhaps the most important, and also the best-known and best-researched field, is that of *theology*. The schism in the Hegelian school in the 1830s can be traced back to conflicts over the relationship between theology and philosophy. The ultimate catalyst was David Friedrich Strauss in his work *The Life of Jesus* (*Das Leben Jesu*, 1835). The lively debates in the so-called Hegelian school, too easily divided into a 'right' and a 'left' wing, have long remained underexposed in the history of philosophy.[8] Attention is most readily given to Feuerbach – not least because he was so important for the development of Marx. In the field of *law* or legal philosophy, the important role of (neo-)Hegelianism belongs at the centre of German jurisprudence, particularly the Hegelian interpretation of legal philosophy by Binder and his pupils (Larenz, Dulckeit). Rosenzweig's theory (*Hegel and the State*, *Hegel und der Staat*, 1920) that Hegel's concept of the state was an intellectual forerunner of Bismarck's nation-state should also be discussed here. England, too, deserves a mention: Hegel had an enormous impact at the end of the nineteenth century in Oxford and Cambridge, as is demonstrated by the programme of social reform implemented by Asquith before 1914. In Italy, attention should be paid to Gentile. The influence on *social theory* of the Hegelian concepts of the spirit and of *Sittlichkeit* (ethical life) can be detected both in France, from the beginning of the nineteenth century (for example in the early socialist Charles Fourier) down to Émile Durkheim's conceptions of the person and of society and in Georg Simmel, the founder of German sociology.[9] As far as *historiography* or the philosophy of history is concerned, Rüdiger Bubner has already demonstrated that historicism has become a way 'of inheriting the insights of the Hegelian system'.[10] He demonstrated, for example, that a follower of Hegel such as the historian Johann Gustav Droysen, in rejecting a transcendental mover behind the historical process, can invoke the broad theological imagery in Hegel's philosophy of history, in which the talk is of divine knowledge and theodicy. The ideal of scientific historiography must be defended against this kind of metaphysical commitment. In the twentieth century, this would mean attending, for example, to Hans Freyer's *World History of Europe* (*Weltgeschichte Europas*, 1949). Kojève's influential interpretation of Hegel led to the twentieth-century French discovery of Hegel, and is today reflected

in discussion of Fukuyama's theses on the 'end of history'.[11] Even the theory of *education* has not remained unaffected: the German Idealist theory of *Bildung* has been widely influential in the pedagogy of the humanities (Nohl, Spranger, Litt, Flitner). Derbolav's praxeological approach also belongs here.

The most difficult field, thus far hardly researched, is that of *nature philosophy*. We know that Friedrich Engels referred to Hegel's natural philosophy, but we do not yet know much about Hegel's impact on the emergent natural sciences of the nineteenth century. Myriam Gerhard is currently working in this area. The concern here is not simply Hegel's fate in the nineteenth century, or the relationship between philosophy/logic and the individual sciences, but the total change in the concept of science in the nineteenth century. The aim is a defence of Hegel and his philosophy of nature, in particular his claim to be doing philosophy. Hegel's reception must be reconstructed, particularly in respect of the nascent individual sciences. Gerhard's main thesis relates to the importance of logic in grounding the sciences, exemplified in the work of John Stuart Mill, as well as in that of Hegel.

The influence of German Idealism and particularly of Hegel is clearly apparent in the history of German *literary scholarship*. As Klaus Weimar has demonstrated, the first scholars to declare their efforts in the field of German literature to be systematic were neither Herder nor the Schlegel brothers, nor Gervinus, but certain of Hegel's pupils, who were well aware of the novelty of their intentions and procedures. It was admittedly a type of literary scholarship without literary scholars: for all the writers in question their scholarship was an occasional sideline (incidentally without being fundamentally restricted to German literature). Hinrichs' book on Goethe's *Faust*, which emerged from a Heidelberg lecture in the winter semester of 1821/2, may be considered the first work of systematic literary scholarship.

> The systematic method, the self-conscious deduction of all elements of the work of art, of their relationship to one another and their position within the whole – the method of deduction from an original idea, as it was developed by Hinrichs, and first implemented in his lecture on *Faust* – along with the appropriate Hegelian terminology – were the distinguishing characteristic of the first phase of German literary scholarship.[d]

d. 'Die wissenschaftliche Methode der sich selbst begreifenden Konstruktion aller Elemente des Kunstwerkes sowie ihres Verhältnisses zueinander und ihrer Stellung im Ganzen, – die Methode der Konstruktion aus der Idee, wie sie Hinrichs entwickelt und in seiner Faustvorlesung zuerst durchgeführt hat, bildet – nebst der zugehörigen Hegelschen Terminologie – das Kennzeichen der ersten Phase der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft.' Klaus Weimar, 'Zur Geschichte der Literaturwissenschaft', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 50 (1976), 298–364, 309.

Other works of the Hegelian school in the literary arena include Hotho's essays in the *Annals of Scholarly Criticism* (*Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*) and the literary publications of Rötscher and Rosenkranz, all of which, apart from the last, have been entirely overlooked. Nevertheless, it is important to remember what Klaus Weimar wrote over thirty years ago: 'German literary criticism arose as a practical aesthetic within the Hegelian school.'[e] But the history of literary historiography may also be interpreted as a development of Idealist tendencies on the most general level; even the concept of 'world literature' may have relevance here. The legacy of Idealism became visible in genre theory, too (noticeable in the long-term consequences of the Hegelian definition of lyric poetry as 'subjective'), as well as in approaches to literary periodisation.

The name of Hotho leads us to another central field, namely that of *art theory* and art history in the nineteenth century. As Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert in particular has demonstrated, Hegel, in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art*, had a great impact on the theory – which had arisen in partial independence of him – of academic art history in Germany, most importantly in the work of H.G. Hotho and Carl Schnaase.[12] Equally, the Austrian and Swiss approaches to art history (Alois Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin) were not uninfluenced by Hegel.

Hegel's impact on aesthetics cannot be separated from his followers' interest in art theory and cultural policy. Their reinterpretations introduce a solidly metaphysical conception of history into the foundational debates of art history. In the work of Theodor Mundt, and in the later work of Friedrich Theodor Vischer, there is a perceptible transformation of this metaphysical conception of history into 'historicism'. These critical extensions of the idea of aesthetics in Hegel's 'Berlin Lectures' might actually seem truer to Hegel than the interpretation of, for example, Hotho. Later developments that originated from Hegel – for example, the aesthetics of M. Schasler and M. Carrière – demonstrate the transition from the Hegelian to a neo-Kantian or psychological aesthetic. In connection with this systematic development of Hegel by his followers, there arose an urgent desire to link the philosophy of art with art history and art criticism for the purposes of cultural and educational policy. From this perspective, the philosophical debate seemed doubly topical: first, there was the attempt to implement Hegel's aim of instituting a theory of art; then, there was a further extension of this tendency, formulated by Hotho – in a manner typical of the Hegelian school – in his conception

e. 'Die deutsche Literaturwissenschaft ist als angewandte Ästhetik in der Hegelschule entstanden.' Weimar, 'Zur Geschichte der Literaturwissenschaft', 312.

of 'speculative' art history. The cause of art became a cultural-political cause and thus (in the contemporary perspective) a political position: evidence for support either for restoration or for revolution.

A discussion of Hegel's aesthetic and its subsequent continuation by Hegelians therefore offers a means of investigating the Hegelian influence on the institutionalisation of the study of art and on the management of the reception of art for cultural-political ends. The contrast between Hegel's conceptualisation as represented in the lectures and as actualised by the Hegelians indicates the change from a concern for art in the context of the (revolutionary) concern for the perfection of humanity to the interaction of the *Bildungsbürger* with art in its accepted forms of transmission (museums, academies, academy exhibitions, etc.). Here we see demonstrated in exemplary fashion how the processes of cultural change are fundamentally shaped by the forms and (new) institutions for the transfer of societal knowledge. The institutionalisation of art reception, the relationship between art and the public sphere in its conditions of origin in the early nineteenth century could be examined in terms of the Hegelian school's influence on the aspirations of Berlin museums. Hegel's endeavours to influence the policy of museum establishments were only partially successful. His followers (particularly Hotho and Friedrich Förster) later played an active role in the construction of museums.[13]

Yet when art history as a subject – like other disciplines, for example, French – makes the transition from being a non-academic cultural accomplishment into a university discipline,[14] it is closely associated with another of the Idealist philosophers, namely Schelling. Schelling's blueprint for a university in his *Lectures on the Method of Academic Study* (*Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums*, delivered in 1802, published in 1803) was the only manifesto for the new Berlin university that contained a systematic plan for the academic study of art. Theory of art, now plainly and self-evidently understood as the academic study of all the fine arts, must exhibit the essence and the ultimate principles of art; it is the metaphysics of art. This is not an arbitrary addition to the other disciplines, but something altogether essential for a philosophical university, for it is precisely the absolute identity between freedom and nature that comes into focus in art, and that is something that philosophy – and therefore all properly grounded knowledge – must presuppose. Schelling therefore consciously distinguishes aesthetics from the empirical knowledge of the individual arts or academies, but also from purely empirical art history such as Fiorillo's.

Schelling's lectures open up a further central, but often unnoticed, legacy of German Idealism – the idea of the *modern university*, which, finally, I would like to discuss briefly. In Germany between 1802 and 1810, there was a vigorous discussion, begun by the German Enlightenment, on the elimination of the medieval and clerical mindset still prevailing in the universities. Representatives of all the faculties contributed suggestions for the institutionalisation of middle-class academic and educational ideals. However, it was from philosophy, and particularly from German Idealism, that there came an idea that was to bear fruit in all branches of learning: the university as the institution for a philosophically based union of all disciplines, the *Universitas litterarum*. Everyone knows that the Humboldt-type university, with its three pillars – academic freedom, unity of teaching and research, the cultural value of learning – was the supreme model of a modern university until well into the twentieth century. What is less well known, however, is the fact that the idea of the freedom and unity of the academic disciplines is grounded in Schelling's philosophy. Schelling's *Lectures*, given in Jena in the summer of 1802, built on Kant's decisive theoretical call in *The Conflict of the Faculties* for a far-reaching reform of the universities, and outlined a programme for a new university in the spirit of speculative Idealism. These lectures were the key philosophical premise for the establishment of the new University of Berlin. The university conceived by Schelling is so entirely philosophical a university that it does not possess a separate Faculty of Philosophy. All its disciplines are entirely philosophical – starting with theology and extending from medicine and natural sciences, on the one hand, to jurisprudence and history, on the other, and culminating in the theory of art. Philosophy, here, lays its claim to be the only science, since it alone can furnish ultimate reasons for things and thus ensure the cohesion of knowledge. In this work the rejection of any demand for utility or for study as a means to an end is manifest. This case for freedom follows on directly from Schelling's understanding of science, in the full sense of *Wissenschaft*, which can unquestionably be considered one of the most fundamental legacies of Idealism. There is, according to Schelling, no science, no systematic body of knowledge, which really is simply vocational, but every discipline can be so perverted if one treats it as a 'means' and not as an end in itself. 'The purpose of vocational study is simply to learn the results . . . '[f] Science, however, that is, academic study, is concerned with reasons. A simply historical transmission of knowledge

f. 'Der Zweck des Brotstudiums ist, dass man die bloßen Resultate kennen lernt . . . ' F. W. J. Schelling, *Vorlesungen über die Methode (Lehrart) des akademischen Studiums*, ed. Walter E. Ehrhardt (Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1990), 36.

belongs in school. Schelling demands that in a university, 'this transmission takes place in the spirit'.[g] Those who 'proceed in their scholarship as though they were tenants occupying someone else's property without themselves owning it . . . are unworthy'.[h] An academic teacher cannot concern him- or herself with simply reporting the knowledge of others – a union of teaching and research is necessary:

> The real merit of a lively teaching style does not lie in the teacher's just presenting conclusions . . . but, at least in all the higher sciences, in his demonstrating the art of arriving at them for oneself, and in each particular case allowing the whole field to emerge, so to speak, before the eyes of his pupils.[i]

This understanding of productive scholarship also has consequences for the state: the state can do without universities and – as it once did in France – found professional and technical colleges in their place. But when the state desires universities, 'one must also desire scholarship. Scholarship, however, ceases to be scholarship as soon as it is reduced to a mere means to an end and is not also prosecuted for its own sake.'[j] This means that universities must not become merely training centres (for servants of the state). One cannot therefore simply reject ideas, 'because they have no use in ordinary life, no practical utility and are not applicable to experience'.[k]

This rejection of utility is reinforced by Schleiermacher in his *Occasional Thoughts on Universities* (*Gelegentliche Gedanken über Universitäten*, 1808). This liberal, neo-humanistic programme sees academic education – free of external purposes – as the formation of individuality. As a pronounced liberal, Schleiermacher sees the development of scholarly individuality and independence as being grounded in academic freedom. Schools and university are sharply separated: the student should have no external authority – other than scholarship itself – and no curriculum, but should simply be subject to

g. 'Überlieferung mit Geist geschehe', *Ibid*., 27.

h. 'Wer in seiner Wissenschaft nur wie in einem fremden Eigentume lebt, wer sie nicht persönlich besitzt . . . ist ein Unwürdiger', *Ibid*.

i. 'Dies ist der wahre Vorzug der lebendigen Lehrart, dass der Lehrer nicht Resultate hinstellt . . . sondern dass er, in allen höheren Szienzen wenigstens, die Art zu ihnen zu gelangen selbst darstellt und in jedem Fall das Ganze der Wissenschaft gleichsam erst vor den Augen des Lehrlings entstehen lässt', *Ibid*., 28.

j. 'So muß man auch die Wissenschaft wollen. Die Wissenschaft aber hört als Wissenschaft auf, sobald sie zum bloßen Mittel herabgesetzt und nicht zugleich um ihrer selbst willen gefördert wird.' *Ibid*., 23.

k. 'Weil sie keinen Nutzen für das gemeine Leben haben, von keiner praktischen Anwendung, keines Gebrauchs in der Erfahrung fähig sind', *Ibid*., 23.

his or her own responsibility. It is precisely this academic freedom for all scholars that, for Schleiermacher, separates those who see study as a means to an end from those with scholarly minds.

The contemporary debate over the crisis of the European university tradition does not lack appeals to Wilhelm von Humboldt's idea of a university, but the affiliation of that idea to the philosophy of German Idealism is rarely discussed in depth. Yet in the current situation, when universities are no longer threatened by theology or by state intervention, but, as Reinhardt Brandt polemically observed in his study of Kant, 'by the economy and by commercial society',[l] it is particularly urgent to reflect on the legacy of German Idealism, a legacy which may best be summarised in a single demand – the demand for freedom.

*Translated by Mary Boyle*

## Notes

1. See D. Henrich, *Konstellationen: Probleme und Debatten am Ursprung der idealistischen Philosophie (1789–1795)* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986); Martin Mulsow and Marcelo Stamm (eds.), *Konstellationsforschung* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2005).
2. Rüdiger Bubner, *Innovationen des Idealismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 5.
3. See Peter Grove, 'Leben und Denken in Philosophie und Religion – vom Idealismus zur Phänomenologie', unpublished conference paper, 'German Idealism – Philosophy and Religion as a Matter of Life', Center for Subjectivity Research and Goethe-Institut Kopenhagen, Copenhagen, 1–3 March 2006.
4. See F. Beiser, 'The concept of German Idealism', unpublished conference paper, 'German Idealism – Philosophy and Religion as a Matter of Life', Copenhagen, *Ibid*.
5. M. J. Inwood, 'German philosophy', in Ted Honderich (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 333–6, 336.
6. See Manfred Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung: Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1997).
7. See my article 'Heideggers frühe Begründung der Hermeneutik', *Dilthey-Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Geschichte der Geisteswissenschaften*, 4 (1986/7), 72–90.
8. This is slowly changing. To this end, the Fritz Thyssen-Stiftung in Cologne is supporting a project entitled: 'Die Hegel-Schule. Eine kommentierte Textauswahl in zwei Bänden' ('The Hegelian School: text extracts in two volumes with commentary'), which will be conducted by Klaus-M. Kodalle, Philosophy Institute, Friedrich Schiller University of Jena.

l. 'Durch die Wirtschaft oder die kommerzielle Gesellschaft', Reinhard Brandt, *Universität zwischen Selbst- und Fremdbestimmung: Kants 'Streit der Fakultäten'. Mit einem Anhang zu Heideggers 'Rektoratsrede'* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag 2003), 164.

9. See, for example, Petra Christian, *Einheit und Zwiespalt. Zum hegelianisierenden Denken in der Philosophie und Soziologie Georg Simmels* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1978).
10. Rüdiger Bubner, *The Innovations of Idealism*, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 165; Bubner, *Innovationen des Idealismus*, 112.
11. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin, 1992).
12. See, most recently, Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, *Einführung in Hegels Ästhetik* (Tübingen/Munich: Fink, 2005). The problem was previously the subject of a subproject in the DFG's *Sonderforschungsbereich* 119 'Wissen und Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert', carried out between 1983 and 1984 at the Ruhr University Bochum.
13. On the controversies over the policy for the Berlin Altes Museum (Old Museum) between Schinkel, Humboldt, Waagen and Aloys Hirt, see Annette Gilbert, 'Die "ästhetische Kirche". Zur Entstehung des Museums am Schnittpunkt von Kunstautonomie und -religion', *Athenäum*, 2009, 45–85.
14. See Gunter Scholz, 'Die Kunstwissenschaft und die Institutionen. Zum Wandel des Verhältnisses von Kunst und Wissenschaft im Zeitalter Hegels', in C. Jamme and F. Völkel (eds.), *Kunst und Geschichte im Zeitalter Hegels* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1996), 167–90.

2

# Hegel's philosophical theory of action: the concept of action in Hegel's practical philosophy and aesthetics

Klaus Vieweg

It may seem presumptuous to enter a plea on behalf of Hegel as part of a network centred in Cambridge, a city so strongly associated with the name of Wittgenstein. And I hope that Wittgenstein may forgive me if, provocatively enough, I go even further and offer the following remarks as a direct contribution to the current 'Hegelian Turn', understood in terms of Robert Pippin's claim for *Idealism as Modernism*. I should like to demonstrate the far-reaching significance of German Idealism – the *Impact of Idealism* – by indicating the contemporary relevance of Hegel's theory of action, and for this purpose I shall focus on two specific examples: (a) Hegel's philosophical conception of punishment as one of the foundations of contemporary legal penal theories; and (b) the modern character of the precise distinction between 'deed' and 'act' and its significance for contemporary theories of action.[1]

Although it hardly seems disputed today that Hegel's practical philosophy is essentially be understood as a *philosophical theory of action* (in this connection Robert Pippin speaks of a 'rational agency theory of freedom',[2] and Michael Quante of a 'critical theory of action'[3]), there are only a few extensive and illuminating discussions of this question. In the *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*,[4] Hegel's principal contribution to 'the practical domain', the philosopher unfolds the concept of action on three levels, developed in relation to the acting subject in each case. This sequence of levels embraces in turn: (a) the *formal-juridical behaviour of the agent qua 'person'*; (b) the *action of the moral subject*; and (c) the *action of the ethical subject*.[5] On the one hand, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* also develops the concept of action by reference to an interpretation of specific works of art, an approach which helps to define this concept more sharply in the context of practical philosophy, and contributes to a more precise analysis of the components, types and forms of action and of conflictual behaviour as well.

On the other hand, Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics* (specifically the third chapter on 'Artistic Beauty and the Ideal') contain a special section under the title of 'Action' ('*Die Handlung*'), in which he expressly draws attention to the internal relationship between action, language and poetic speech. Thus, he writes: 'Action is the clearest revelation of the individual, of his temperament as well as his aims; what a man is at bottom, and in his inmost being comes into actuality only by his action, and action, because of its spiritual origin, wins its greatest clarity and definiteness in spiritual expression also, i.e. in speech alone.'[a] Hegel's entire philosophy of art, and especially his account of literature, undertakes to show the validity of this principle by reference to a variety of poetic works, and thereby also contributes to a more precise understanding of the concept of action and of literature in general. This mutual enrichment and illumination of practical philosophy and aesthetics will be illustrated in what follows by reference to specific aspects of the concept of action and to certain selected works of art.

After a few preliminary observations, I shall explicate my basic thesis by reference to two issues in the theory of action: (a) crime and punishment; and (b) the distinction between purpose (*Vorsatz*) and intention (*Absicht*), and to two works of dramatic art that are directly relevant to these issues. As our starting point we shall take the discussion of 'The Ideal' in Hegel's *Aesthetics*, and specifically the aforementioned section on 'Action', since these passages present his reflections on the relationship between the 'practical' or sociopolitical world and the world of art, between the realms of Objective and Absolute Spirit. These ideas are well known to those who are familiar with Hegel and will merely be sketched briefly here, albeit from the specific perspective of the concept of action. The specific and determinate character of the Ideal in Hegel shows how the Idea goes out of itself to assume actual determinacy, how it emerges into the realm of externality and finitude.[6] This process of determination, insofar as it advances through particularity to difference within itself and to the resolution of the latter, is described as 'action' in the context of art. Insofar as the Idea determines itself in this way, it divests itself of abstraction, of mere unity and universality, and connects directly with the realm of images and sensible perception.[7] Hegel writes:

a. 'Die Handlung ist die klarste Enthüllung des Individuums, seiner Gesinnung sowohl als auch seiner Zwecke; was der Mensch im innersten Grunde ist, bringt sich erst durch sein Handeln zur Wirklichkeit, und das Handeln, um seines geistigen Ursprungs willen, gewinnt auch im geistigen Ausdruck, in der Sprache, in der Rede allein seine größte Klarheit und Bestimmtheit.' Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*. Auf der Grundlage der Werke von 1832–1845, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969ff.), (hereafter HW), XIII, 385; English translation: *Aesthetics*, 2 vols., trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) (hereafter Knox), I, 219.

> True independence consists solely in the unity and interpenetration of individuality and universality. The universal wins concrete reality only through the individual, just as the individual and particular subject finds only in the universal the impregnable basis and genuine content of his actual being.[b]

It is thus necessary for us to conceive of the logical unity of the universal, the particular and the individual. The principle of particularity implies the representation of the universal by means of fantasy and imagination, of intuitive and pictorial presentation, and this produces a manifold range and variety of further determination. Images and representations always appear in multiple form, while the Concept presents itself only as *single*.

The work of art thus synthesises universality and particularity, unites the spirit that is embodied in activity with an enduring tranquil form in the unshakeable certainty of freedom. As examples of such effectively accomplished symbiosis, Hegel specifically mentions Hercules, the Greek gods, the figure of Don Quixote. In the particular actions of determinate characters, directly involved and bound up as they are with the conditions of the external reality, these agents are able to preserve their freedom, can remain self-possessed in the realm of otherness and externality. The self-relation of the agents is thus concretely presented in vivid and imaginative form. Modern romantic poetry and literature in particular concentrates on relating the fictional life-stories of irreplaceable and particular subjects; the paradigm here being Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel's novel *Lebensläufe in aufsteigender Linie*, with its striking and unforgettable opening line: 'I.' According to Hegel, it is 'characters' that furnish 'the real central focus of artistic presentation'. Or to formulate the claim the other way round: agents specified by name, such as Oedipus, Orestes, Wilhelm Meister, Josef Knecht or William of Baskerville, do not appear as such in the theory of action in the context of practical philosophy, and cannot be thematised expressly in that context.

The protagonists of poetry and literature preserve the universality of freedom within themselves, even if their action manifests itself as a particular, determinate and externally directed form of action. This in relation to the decisive logical transition from § 5 to § 6 in the *Philosophy of Right* – the necessary logical transition from universality to particularity[8] – Hegel emphasises that freedom must reveal itself immanently as a whole and at the same time as the possibility of particularising itself, as the potentiality

b. 'Die wahre Selbständigkeit besteht allein in der Einheit und Durchdringung des Individuellen und Allgemeinen, indem ebensosehr das Allgemeine durch das Einzelne erst konkrete Realität gewinnt, als das einzelne und besondere Subjekt in dem Allgemeinen erst die unerschütterliche Basis und den echten Gehalt seiner Wirklichkeit findet.' HW XIII, 237; Knox, I, 180.

for anything.[9] And this yields a provisional definition of action in the poetic and literary context, namely, as the internally differentiated and dynamic determinacy of the Ideal. The particular is here wrested from the realm of mere contingency, and concrete particularity is thereby vividly presented in its universality. As Hegel puts it: 'spirit's particularization, turned out from within into external existence is immediately bound up with the principle of *development*, and therefore, in this relation to externality, with the difference and struggle of oppositions'.[c] The appeal and power of the work of art springs from this development, shaped as it is by tension and internal conflict, and from the resulting self-reintegration of spirit.

## 1. Crime and punishment: the Eumenides and Hegel's grounding of punishment in the theory of action

Hegel's theory of wrong and of the nature of punishment has been accorded an extraordinary degree of recognition in the field of contemporary legal theory, and it is regarded as one of the most significant contributions to the modern theory of punishment. Hegel treats 'wrong' – the *negation of right* – as the third level of abstract right. The latter, driven to an extreme, is capable of reverting to its opposite (*summum ius summa iniuria*) as the infringement of right. In the form of its outer existence (as body and external property), the will can be affected, violated and injured, that is to say, can suffer *violence*, and through this violence can thus be subjected to *coercion* (PhR, § 90). Abstract right 'generally has as its object only what is external in actions'.[d] In his theory of punishment Hegel follows Kant's reflections on the concept of right, which is intrinsically connected with the possibility of legitimate coercion, and his idea of a second coercion:[10] a wrong or illegitimate case of coercion, as Kant says, 'is a hindrance or resistance to freedom', and the coercion that is opposed to this can be regarded as 'a hindering of a hindrance to freedom', which yields the permissibility of coercion with respect to the first or original coercion. As Kant puts it, 'Right and the authorization to use coercion therefore mean one and the same thing.'[e] Against the coercion

c. 'Mit der ins Dasein herausgekehrten Besonderheit [ist] zugleich das Prinzip der Entwicklung und damit in dem Verhältnis nach außen der Unterschied und Kampf der Gegensätze unmittelbar verbunden.' HW XIII, 233; Knox, I, 177.

d. 'Nur das zum Objekte, was in Handlungen äußerlich ist' Kant, *Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Königlich-preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1900–) (hereafter GS) VI, 232; *The Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Kant's Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 389.

e. 'Ist ein Hinderniß oder Widerstand, der der Freiheit geschieht . . . Verhinderung eines Hindernisses der Freiheit . . . Recht und Befugnis zu zwingen bedeuten also einerlei.' GS IV, 231–2; *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 388–9.

of heteronomy a *second* act of coercion appears to be justified. Kant speaks of 'the law of a reciprocal coercion necessarily in accord with the freedom of everyone under the principle of universal freedom'.[f] Hegel takes up this thought directly: violence against a natural form of existence that embodies a will must be regarded as an act of coercion. Insofar as the relevant will is only a particular will in opposition to the universal will (and thus no free will at all, or merely will 'in itself'), we must speak of 'coercion in itself', or of *first* coercion. Against such a particular will, against the merely natural or arbitrary will, against mere heteronomy, it is permissible to exercise a *counter-coercion*, which, according to Hegel, only appears as a *first* coercion, but is actually a *second* coercion, as in the context of education or the raising of taxes. We are dealing therefore with a *second* coercion that follows upon the *first* as the *sublation* of the latter (PhR, § 93). Coercion is permissible 'only as the sublation of an initial immediate coercion'.[g] *Coercion is therefore justified solely as second coercion*, as the authorisation of *autonomous* action over against *heteronomous* action. It is only *second coercion*, as sublated first or illegitimate coercion, that can be treated as rightful (the sublating of coercion through coercion), as coercion directed *against* the denial of right and thus as the *re-establishment* of right. Through this negation of the negation (this 'hindering of a hindrance to freedom'[h]), right becomes something binding, something capable of being enforced, a real power.

Punishment as an *expression of second coercion* must be ascribed to the deed of the agent, and reverses the first aspect, that of the original transgression that violates right. *And it is only then that the agent's action is completed*. The punishment that answers a crime is 'is no external consequence, but rather an essential one that is posited by the action itself'.[i] This analysis provides the central concept for a legitimation of legal punishment that is grounded in the theory of action. Punishment must be regarded as 'in and for itself a null form of action, an infringement of right as right, of the free will as free will'.[j]

f. 'Eines mit jedermanns Freiheit nothwendig zusammenstimmenden wechselseitigen Zwanges unter dem Princip der allgemeinen Freiheit.' *Ibid.*, 232; *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 389.

g. 'Nur als das Aufheben eines ersten, unmittelbaren Zwanges.' G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, HW viii–x (hereafter Enc.), here §501.

h. 'Verhinderung eines Hindernisses der Freiheit.' GS iv, 231; *The Metaphysics of Morals*, 388.

i. 'Keine äußerliche, sondern eine wesentlich durch die Handlung selbst gesetzte Folge . . . , aus der Natur der Handlung selbst fließend, eine Manifestation derselben.' G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts. Nachschrift der Vorlesung von 1822/23 von K. L. Heyse*, ed. E. Schilbach (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 1999), 15–16.

j. 'Eine ihrem Wesen nach nichtige Handlung, eine Verletzung des freien Willens als Willen.' G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft Heidelberg 1817/18 mit Nachträgen aus der Vorlesung 1818/19. Nachgeschrieben von P. Wannenmann*, ed. C. Becker *et al.* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1983), 52; G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science*, trans. J. M. Stewart and P. C. Hodgson (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 99.

The strict right to coercion cannot be exercised with regard to the moral dimension, so that *here*, for example, we cannot draw a distinction between theft and robbery, murder and killing, between *deed and action*. The necessary transition to the sphere of morality is thus already announced and unmistakeably anticipated at this point. It must be possible to ascribe the action in violation of right explicitly to the agent as a free act: as damage or injury produced by *free action*. Free acts of omission also belong explicitly to this class of free acts.[11] The infringement of right certainly brings about damage or injury to the victim, but 'right' itself remains inviolable and untouched, and the 'positive' injury involves only the particular will of the agent. What punishment makes manifest is the necessary nullification of a nullity, the sublation of the crime, a form of retribution as the infringement of an infringement.[12] This brilliant and thoroughly contemporary theory of punishment, explicitly grounded in a theory of action,[13] indicates the limitations of an approach based solely on 'the Understanding', when what is required is precisely the logic of 'the Concept'. Punishment can be described as just or rightful, inasmuch as it presents itself as the *will in itself of the agent himself*, even as the agent's claim and right (!) to be regarded as a subject responsible for his or her acts. In violating the universal character of right the agent has thereby also violated him or herself. Thus, punishment also presents 'a right posited in the criminal himself . . . in his action'.[k] The punishment must therefore be added and attached to the criminal act, is indeed already posited in the agent's act, and must be conceived as a moment internal to the wrongful action. The punishment is regarded as a reversal and equalisation in which the agent himself has an objective interest, even if this would certainly not be admitted or accepted by everyone who violates the law. Punishment may thus be regarded as the manifestation of the crime itself, as the *'other half' of the agent's action*, as the reversal of the criminal act now turned against him- or herself. The central thesis, from the logicopractical point of view, is this: *crime contradicts the concept of the free will and the concept of free action*.

The avenging goddesses of antiquity, the Erinyes, give symbolic expression to this very thought. In the context of his various reflections on the nature of deed and action, whether in the *Philosophy of Right*, in the *Lectures on Aesthetics* or in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel refers repeatedly to this point, appealing in fact to a specific example from the realm of artistic imagination. In these particular passages, as well as in Hegel's

k. 'Ein Recht an den Verbrecher selbst dar, sie ist in seiner Handlung gesetzt.' HW, VII, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (hereafter PhR), § 100.

autograph note and the Addition to § 101 of the *Philosophy of Right*, the three mythological 'conditions' of the avenging Furies are interpreted in terms of the three levels of right, wrong and punishment. Thus, (a) we initially have the sleep of the Eumenides, then (b) they are awoken by the transgressor and his heinous deed, and (c) we have the avenging punishment[14] through which the goddesses are appeased. In the condition of right or justice, the Furies slumber, but 'crime awakens them, and hence it is one's own deed that asserts itself'.[l] The idea of avenging punishment as a reversal of wrong is emphasised in other lecture transcripts too: the Eumenides 'are the very deed of the transgressor, a deed which makes itself felt in the transgressor himself'.[m]

The Eumenides embody 'the very deed of man himself, the consciousness that afflicts and tortures him, insofar as he knows this deed as an evil in him'. They are 'the Just Ones and precisely therefore the Kindly Ones', who 'will the right, and whoever has violated the latter bears the Eumenides in himself'.[n] These Furies are represented as at once *external* and *inner* powers. The external pursuit of the victim is equally 'the inner Fury which penetrates the transgressor's breast. Sophocles uses this too in the sense of the man's own inner being', as in *Oedipus at Colonus*, for example.[o]

When vengeance and punishment are at issue, Hegel, of course, also thinks of the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus. The Furies, the terrifying avenging goddesses from Tartarus, who pursue Orestes for the killing of his mother Clytemnestra, are assuaged only by the goddess Athene and the council on the Areopagus. For here a 'human court, at the head of which stands Athene herself as the concrete spirit of the people, is to resolve the conflict'.[p] Here Apollo and the Eumenides are both honoured in equal measure, which avoids the need for sacrifice on both sides.[15]

In his poem 'The Cranes of Ibycus', Schiller created a modern poetic form in which the cranes represent the 'power of the Eumenides', who have been called forth by the act of murder and provoke the criminal to an unintended

l. 'Das Verbrechen weckt sie, und so ist es die eigene Tat [des Verbrechers] die sich geltend macht.' PhR, § 101, Addition.

m. 'Sind die eigene That des Verbrechers, die sich an ihm geltend macht.' Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts. Nachschrift . . . von K. L. Heyse*, 4.

n. 'Die eigene Tat des Menschen und das Bewußtsein, was ihn plagt, peinigt, insofern er diese Tat als Böses in ihm weiß . . . die gerechten und eben darum die Wohlmeinenden . . . [die] das Recht wollen, und wer es verletzt hat, hat die Eumeniden in ihm selbst.' G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, HW, xvii, 127.

o. 'Die innere Furie, welche durch die Brust des Verbrechers zieht, und Sophokles gebraucht sie auch in dem Sinne des Inneren und Eigenen des Menschen.' HW, xiii, 295; Knox, 227.

p. 'Menschliches Gericht als Ganzes, an dessen Spitze Athene als der konkrete Volksgeist steht, die Lösung der Kollision bringen.' HW, xiv, 68; Knox, 471.

confession. The perpetrators themselves have roused the punishing goddesses of vengeance and the ensuing punishment is therefore the effective result of their own deeds. Thus, Schiller's ballad also presents the idea of a fully accomplished action, from the original crime to the effect of the punishing goddesses, to the act of punishment, to 'the burning ray of vengeance' that completes the action.

### *The necessary self-transcendence of the structure of wrong*

Insofar as *avenging* punishment simply reproduces the preceding structure of wrong, we find ourselves confronted by what Hegel calls the 'bad infinite'. The successful overcoming of this deficient form of judgement expressed in the idea of vengeance can be accomplished only through a *third* kind of judgement, through the resolution of a *third* form of authority, that of punitive justice, the judgement of *right in itself*, in the sense of a neutral or disinterested judgement on a particular case.[16] In the context of Hegel's logical theory this requires a move to the *judgement of reflection* and the long path that leads to the judgement of the concept.[17] It is only when we reach the judgement of reflection (the judgement of the Understanding) that we can truly speak of a power of judgement, or only when an action is expressly assessed as good or bad. In the *Philosophy of Right* this further development of the argument is indicated in part by reference to the necessary process of reflection-into-self and in part by reference to the 'disinterested' resolution of a dispute. The indeterminacy here points ahead to a will that is capable of judging, a will that acts both as an individual and as a representative of the universal, namely, a *judger* in the sense of a court and a '*judge*'.

Here, as well as in his claim that the Understanding is not sufficient to grasp the full significance of punishing justice and must therefore give way to the *Concept*, Hegel indicates that the sphere of 'abstract right' immanently points beyond itself to the spheres of 'morality' and 'ethical life' that are still to be conceptualised if, for example, we wish adequately to determine the role of the *judge* who acts authentically on behalf of right. Punishment can properly transpire only within the context of the state. The 'judge' cannot simply rely upon negative-infinite judgements, but must, among other things, 'present' the spirit of the Constitution (an essential moment of ethical life) in his decisions, although this means we have attained a logically higher kind of 'judging' and transcended judgement itself. For the authoritative role of the judge can be determined completely only on the level of *ethical life*. And here the sphere of ethical life already reveals itself as the authentic ground of practical philosophy.

As a whole, we can say that Hegel presents the relevant 'criteria even for a contemporary theory of punishment'.[18] Hegel's philosophical theory of punishment (indeed, his entire 'idealism of freedom') represents a highly original contribution to the field and a conception that retains its relevance to this day. It draws its intellectual power and its fascination precisely from *the logical foundation* that underpins it, and indeed *this is the fundamental reason for its continuing contemporary significance*. And in view of this explicitly philosophical grounding of punishment, it is also well worth pursuing these Hegelian paths of thought even further.

### *The transition from abstract right to morality*

On the final level of formal right, with the exercise of rightful punishment, the will is thrown back upon itself (in what Hegel calls 'reflection into itself'). The *singular individual in its 'simple' universality* thereby accomplishes a return to the *particular* will through the determination of punishment as the *right of the agent himself*. The previously encountered form of self-relation must thus be extended: on account of the limitations that have been revealed, the self-referential structure can no longer remain simply 'external', but must pass on to internal reflection, to particularity. The negativity of abstract right that has now been diagnosed – and that found its turning point in crime, in the denial of right as such – has led to its own negation. The will has increasingly revealed itself not only as free intrinsically or *in itself*, but as explicitly free *for itself*, and the determinate particular will therefore now becomes *its own object*. In the movement through abstract-formal right, it has become increasingly evident that the assumed immediacy of willing is mediated through the *subjectively particular will*, and thus that immediacy itself must be thought of in terms of mediation. What became quite clear was the necessity of advancing beyond the formal-abstract level (both from the perspective of logical theory and that of practical philosophy itself). We can thus no longer ignore or abstract, as we had to at the beginning (PhR, § 37), from this particularity of the will. The will itself is thrown back upon itself in its specific individual selfhood. The thought of particularity emerges necessarily from the examination of the logical structure of singularity and universality. Universality, as identity, has distinguished itself into difference, into non-identity, into opposition. The *judgement of existence* inevitably sublates itself and passes over into the *judgement of reflection*: 'The individual, posited in the judgement as individual (as reflected into itself), has a predicate, in comparison with which the subject, as self-relating, still remains something *other*.'[q] The singular or individual

q. 'Das Einzelne, als Einzelnes (reflektiert in sich) ins Urteil gesetzt, hat ein Prädikat, gegen welches das Subjekt als sich auf sich beziehendes zugleich ein *Andres* bleibt.' Enc., § 174.

thus immediately comes into focus as something particular, as subjective will that is reflected into itself. 'Since the determinacy of the will is thus posited *inwardly*, the will exists at the same time as a *particular* will, and thus arise further particularizations of it and the relations of these to one another.'[r]

The universal here can no longer be identified with abstract universality, for we are now dealing with a universal that comprehends itself as one through the connection of different moments.[19] As Hegel writes: 'In *existence* the subject ceases to be immediately qualitative, but is here in *relation* and *interconnection with something other*.'[s] The judgement 'this action is bad' relates not only to the particular subject (without reference to other subjects), but also to the intersubjective context itself.

To recapitulate, then, we can say that personality here becomes its own object, and is reflected into itself. The object of the second sphere (that of morality) can be understood as a strict result of the dynamic unfolding of the first sphere (abstract right), and not as something that is simply added on in an external fashion. At the same time, the being-for-self that has been attained here presents the *inner subjectivity of freedom*, and also the moment of contingency, which has been posited through the particular and contingent will. This subjective-contingent will, however, possesses standing and validity only in its unity with the universal will, insofar as the subjective will 'is within itself the existence of the rational will',[t] is reflected into itself, and represents the infinite contingency of willing in itself.[20] That the *subjective-particular* will intrinsically relates in this way to a *universal* will is what Hegel designates as *morality*.

From abstract determinacy, from the immediacy or being-in-itself of the will – which manifests itself in relation to 'things' and focuses upon action as negative, upon prohibition – Hegel's argument moves onwards to subjective-particular determinacy, to *action that is concretely required or demanded*, to the inner self-determinacy of subjectivity. Thought moves from juridical action to moral action, from the *abstract-formal recognition of the singular person* to the *reflective recognition of the particular person as a moral subject*, from abstract formal right to morality. And morality, as the *sphere of particularity*, acquires an extraordinary significance for determining the essential character of modernity.[21]

r. 'Damit, daß die Willensbestimmtheit so *im Innern* gesetzt ist, ist der Wille zugleich als ein *besonderer*, und es treten die weiteren Besonderungen desselben und deren Beziehungen aufeinander ein.' Enc., § 503.

s. 'In der *Existenz* ist das Subjekt nicht mehr unmittelbar qualitativ, sondern im *Verhältnis* und *Zusammenhang mit einem Anderen*.' Enc., § 174.

t. 'In ihm selbst als das Dasein des vernünftigen Willens ist.' Enc., § 502.

## II. Orestes and Oedipus: heroic self-consciousness and modernity

Most forms of contemporary analytical philosophy show no real awareness of Hegel's theory of action. But the emphasis upon the internal connection between motivation and deed, between the inner constitution of the subject and its realisation in action, upon *the conceptual tie between genuine action and intention*, is not a discovery or unique achievement of twentieth-century analytical philosophy, of thinkers such as Donald Davidson, for example.[22] In fact, this thought is fundamental to Hegel's account of *action*, an account in which he distinguishes terminologically between deed and action (between *Tat* and *Handlung*). Only when attention is given to purpose and intention (*Vorsatz* and *Absicht*), in contrast to the deeds analyzed in the context of formal right, can we properly speak of 'actions'. The inner conscious motivation belongs to action in the complete sense, and the motivating grounds are constitutive for the free will. We thereby arrive at a higher level of right and freedom. Action in the full sense is *an outer expression of the inner determinacy of the will*, so that the free will recognises, and allows to be ascribed to itself, only that which it has *itself knowingly willed*.[23] In *acting*, in the expression of the inner spirit, we have 'the actual realization, *the exposition of our inner intentions and purposes*'. What belongs to the deed is 'the whole range of determinations which stand in an immediate connection with a change that has been produced in external existence'.[u] What belongs to action, on the other hand, is only that which 'lies in decision, or was present to the consciousness in question, that which the will therefore ascribes to itself as its own'.[v] Through action the subject (the human being) enters actively into the concrete world of actuality.[24] The *further determination of the concept of action* and the judgement passed upon particular forms and courses of action now constitute the real object of attention and concern. For free activity cannot be reduced to a question of whether it is 'formally right' or permitted, but it must also be capable of being evaluated, of being described as morally valuable or 'good'.

'The shapes we have before us are nothing but the presentation of *the progressive development of the abstract concept of the free will*.'[w] This principal

u. 'Der ganze Umfang von Bestimmungen, die mit einer hervorgebrachten Veränderung des Daseins in unmittelbaren Zusammenhang stehen.' HW, IV, 58.

v. 'Von der Tat im Entschlusse liegt oder im Bewußtsein war, was somit der Wille als das Seinige sich zuschreibt.' HW, IV, 207.

w. 'Die Gestalten, die wir betrachten, sind nichts anderes als die Darstellung des *Fortgangs des abstrakten Begriffs des freien Willens*.' G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts. Die Vorlesung von*

level of this determination of the free will comprises Hegel's *philosophical theory of moral action*. Insofar as activity or 'actuosity' is a constituent of the will, this philosophical theory of free willing involves an 'ongoing preparation' for the full concept of action, and indeed on *three principal levels* which together present the essential dimensions of free action. This sequence of levels encompasses: (a) the *formal-legal activity of the agent as 'person'*; (b) the *acting of the moral subject*; and (c) the *acting of the ethical subject*.

Essential determinations of action already come into view on the first two of these levels, albeit from a limited perspective in each case, namely, that of abstract right and morality, respectively.[25] And to that extent we still are unable to provide a fully adequate determination of the concept of action. It is only on the third level, that of *ethical* action, that we can properly fulfil this demand. But it is under the rubric of morality that the *concept of acting* is expressly introduced. This is the first place where we can deal with the phenomenon of action itself.

> Here is where *action* appears for the first time. Something that is connected with right can also be action, yet it does not possess the formal nature of the latter in itself . . . It is the activity of moral subjective willing that belongs to action . . . without purpose (*Vorsatz*) there is no *action*, but only *deed*, in which judgement does not yet enter.[x]

But the concept of action is by no means exhausted in this regard, and truly becomes an object in the highest sense only in the chapter on ethical life. On the level of morality we are moving in the realm of particularity, on the terrain of the merely subjective-formal dimension of action, the achievements and limitations of which are clearly exhibited by Hegel. These reflections are concerned with the moral standpoint, which represents the 'reflective judgement of freedom',[y] and thus the work of 'the Understanding'. This is a logically necessary intermediate stage, but one on which the concept of action cannot be explicated fully. Just as the phenomenon of punishment broke open and exceeded the framework of abstract right, so the emergence of morality also breaks open and exceeds its own framework on account of its inner contradiction. Both juridical action and moral action will reveal themselves, taken on their own, as two one-sided ways of determining action,

*1819/20 in einer Nachschrift*, ed. Dieter Henrich (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983) (Bloomington transcript), 91 (emphasis added).

x. 'Hier erst tritt *Handlung* ein. Etwas Rechtliches kann auch Handlung seyn, hat aber nicht die formelle Natur derselben an sich [ . . . ] Zur Handlung gehört Thätigkeit des moralischen subjektiven Willens [ . . . ] ohne Vorsatz giebt es keine *Handlung*, nur *That*, in der das Urteil noch nicht eintritt.' Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts. Nachschrift . . . von K. L. Heyse*, 11.

y. 'Reflexions-Urteil der Freiheit.' Enc., 1817, § 417.

deficient in virtue of their isolation, and finally as *two moments involved in ethical action*. In this sense, Hegel's practical philosophy is essentially concerned *from the first* with ethical action, with the genuine determination of the free will, and with nothing else. It is essentially a *philosophical theory of ethical action*.

This insight into the conceptual connection between authentic deed and intention requires further concretisation, particularly with regard to an understanding of the conceptual dimension that is specifically in play here and with regard to those who engage in action (the agents). In the first place, we must ascribe personhood to the agents in question. Insofar as the motivating grounds are in question, we are talking about moral persons, about *moral subjects*. This requires consideration of all the consequences that sprang from abstract right and the role of personality. To put this in an even pithier and sharper fashion: not every deed is an action, and not every kind of directed movement can properly be described as an action. The spider that runs across Harry Frankfurt's table, the remarkably skilful manner in which my cat Francis succeeds in catching flies, or the way that a small child manages to run backwards or snatches and hides an object do not count as moral actions, since action in the strict sense always signifies the acting and interacting of free and intelligent beings, of moral persons, which involves, but is not reducible to, deeds that lack the other required component, namely, intention. Even the activity of appropriating or taking possession of something is not described by Hegel as an action, and nor does a deed that infringes right count for him as a positive action. Thus, the moral action of the subject unites the external perspective of the person and the internal perspective of activity, or *genuine action and intention*. The *person* advances to the *moral subject*, *personality* to *moral subjectivity*, and the *formal deed* is developed into *moral action*, into the *right of the subjective will*,[26] and this results in a higher form of self-determination, or *moral freedom*.[27]

### *Hegel's doctrine of judgements as the logical ground of morality*

Once Hegel has determined the basic form of the judgement in the context of his doctrine of logical judgement ('All things are a judgement, that is to say, they are singulars which are a universality or inner nature within themselves, or a universal that is singularized';[z] the finitude of things consists in the fact that they are a judgement, that their existence and their universal nature are different and separable – cf. Enc., § 168), he assesses Kant's attempt to provide a logical division of judgements on the schema of a table of categories.

z. '*Alle Dinge sind ein Urteil*, – d.h. sie sind *Einzelne*, welche eine *Allgemeinheit* oder innere Natur in sich sind, oder ein *Allgemeines*, das *vereinzelt* ist.' Enc., § 167.

In spite of the inadequacy of this schema, it does reflect the insight that 'it is the universal forms of the Idea itself through which the various kinds of judgements are determined'.[aa] In accordance with Hegel's *Logic*, it is necessary to distinguish 'three principal kinds of judgement, which correspond to the levels of being, essence, and the concept'.[bb] The middle term here is internally doubled, in accordance with the nature of essence as the sphere of difference. 'The various kinds of judgement do not simply subsist alongside one another with the same value, but must rather be regarded as a series of levels, and the distinction between them rests on the logical significance of the predicate.'[cc] On this basis, Hegel unfolds a developing series of practical judgements, that is, of judgements that relate specifically to actions. In § 114 of the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel defines the fundamental structure of moral right, or the 'movement of the judgement'[dd] as he describes it elsewhere. This passes through three stages of imputation:[28] (a) the *abstract formal right of action as action that can be ascribed to me*, as purposeful action, characterised by knowledge of the immediate circumstances (the transitory nature of this first level is revealed here, precisely as the abstract-formal right of imputability, which the final level of abstract right logically anticipated): the criminal act as an infinite judgement; (b)(1) the *intention* of the act and its value for me, and (b)(2) *welfare* as the content of action, as my particular will supported by reflective knowledge; and (c) the *Good* as the inner content in its universality and objectivity with its opposition in *subjective universality*, the knowing of the concept, the judgement of the concept, and thus finally the 'determinate and fulfilled unity of the subject and the predicate as their concept',[ee] the transition to the logical form of the syllogism,[29] the conceptually necessary transition from morality to ethical life.

### *The right of knowing: acting in knowledge*

In the opening sections of his theory of moral action, as part of the scientific exposition of practical philosophy, Hegel formulates a fundamental right and thereby also a duty, namely, the *right to knowledge*. The focus lies on the

aa. 'Es die allgemeinen Formen der logischen Idee selbst sind, wodurch die verschiedenen Arten der Urteile bestimmt werden.' Enc., § 171 Addition.

bb. 'Drei Hauptarten des Urteils zu unterscheiden, welche den Stufen des Seins, des Wesens und des Begriffs entsprechen.' *Ibid.*

cc. 'Die verschiedenen Arten des Urteils sind nicht als mit gleichem Werte nebeneinanderbestehend, sondern vielmehr als eine Stufenfolge bildend zu betrachten, und der Unterschied derselben beruht auf der logischen Bedeutung des Prädikats.' *Ibid.*

dd. 'Bewegung des Urteils.' HW, VI, 309; *Science of Logic*, 556.

ee 'Bestimmte und erfüllte Einheit des Subjekts und des Prädikats als ihr Begriff.' HW, VI, 309; *Science of Logic*, 555.

inner knowing self-determination of the will, on the subjective grounds that determine action, on my insight, my inner motivations, my knowing and my purposes, on the 'ethically right' – all of this is an essential determining moment of moral right. In the case of morality, we are concerned with 'the subjective aspect, i.e. knowledge of the circumstances, conviction of the good, and the inner intention, constitute for us a chief element in the action'.[ff] Such knowing in the form of our rational maxims must be inherent in moral action: *insight belongs to intention* and is the 'soul' of action. The ethically good depends on what is ethically 'right', and this is identified, as Kant argues, *independently of the consequences of the act*. 'Hegel is attempting, as Kant did before, to articulate an ethics based on the autonomy of reason.'[30]

Acknowledgement and justification is explicitly accorded here to the motivating grounds of my action, to my free inner process of self-determination. It is only through the *self-ascription of responsibility* that one can speak of *my* action at all. It is possible to clarify Hegel's position in more detail by reference to § 105 of the *Philosophy of Right*, and his own hand-written notes on this section of the text. Once the standpoint of the will as what is 'infinite' in itself, as identity for itself over against immediacy and what is merely in itself, has been clearly determined (and the first level, abstract right, has thus become the object of the second level), it is possible to draw a precise distinction between (a) subject, (b) object and (c) the determination of the concept, and thus capture the thought of the *right of knowing*. The subject now *knows* itself as free, *knows* the freedom within itself – consequently, I *know* myself as being for myself. The object remains the will itself, and thereby its being within itself, or the right of subjective willing as a knowing. The modern understanding of freedom draws attention to the motivating ground of our activities, ignoring the consequences of action (to 'how the matter stood inwardly within me',[gg] to my inner judgement, to my inner consent, to knowing as my knowing, to the ethically right. We are essentially concerned with the willing something that I *know* – something that already stands before me, before the actual expression of action, in this sense as something 'theoretical'.[31] This corresponds to the basic idea of deontological ethics, the relation of ethical evaluation to obligation in the sense of ethically right action, as this finds expression in commands, prohibitions or duties.[32]

The judgement of 'good' or 'evil' refers exclusively to the actions of subjects, rather than to things. Here, again, we should consider the initial

ff. 'Die subjektive Seite des Wissens von den Umständen und der Überzeugung vom Guten sowie der inneren Absicht beim Handeln als ein Hauptmoment.' HW, XIII, 247; Knox, I, 188.
gg. 'Wie die Sache innerlich in mir gewesen.' PhR, § 105, Note.

characterisation of willing as the pure thinking of itself in § 5 of the *Philosophy of Right*. It is insight, knowing, thinking, the 'theoretical' dimension as such, that will provide the basis for the inner determinacy of the subject. We are concerned with action that *knows* what it is, and it is this dimension of *knowing* that first brings the real and distinctive privilege of the free being into view. We are talking about the 'only law that the will of every rational being lays upon itself' (Kant), or about the will that knows itself as absolutely valid (Hegel). From the moral standpoint all the acts or circumstances of potential injury or infringement in terms of formal right may be ignored, for morality itself cannot fall victim to theft, assault, violence or murder. For 'thoughts are free', in the words of an old German song.[33]

In the first instance, the moral standpoint can lay claim to unlimited right and unconditional validity. It unfolds as a process on the basis of three levels of knowing, passing from merely abstract purpose through concrete intention to the right of the subjective will to know the Good, and to the knowing that is con-science (*Ge-wissen*). Expressed in logical terms, it passes from particularity to universality. In this way we rise to a full conceptual comprehension of action, in a logically supported procedure aimed at producing knowledge without the intrusion of *any illegitimate claims*, *unfounded prejudices*, *unjustified assertions*, *or mere assurances*. The human being has a 'right to demand that he *knew* what he was doing'.[hh] Here we are not yet concerned with the consequences of action, but with the inner spirit of the action in terms of *increasing levels of imputation or imputability*.[34] 'The spiritual aspect of action must possess an absolute value.'[ii] The agent is thus at once recognised, respected and honoured as a *thinking* and *willing* subject.

### *The right to knowing and heroic self-consciousness in works of art*

Morality is treated as the first realm of particularity, and § 117 of the *Philosophy of Right* specifically conceptualises this thematic in a pregnant manner: the issue is the ascription of responsibility and the imputation of acts, the 'right to knowing'. In this section of the text, too, Hegel illustrates the theoretical problem of action with examples drawn from poetry and mythology: the deed committed by Oedipus was strictly a slaying rather than a murder, and he cannot be regarded in a modern sense as a parricide or be accused of blood-guilt since the deed in question 'lay neither in his knowing nor

hh. 'Recht zu fordern, daß er das, was er getan, *gewußt hat*.' G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts* . . . (Bloomington transcript), 91f. (emphasis added).

ii. 'Das Geistige der Handlung muß absoluten Wert haben.' PhR, § 124, Note.

his willing'.[jj] His deed is done 'unknowingly', with no awareness that the victim is his father. Both § 118 of the *Philosophy of Right* and the section on 'Action' in the lectures on *Aesthetics* discuss the achievements and the one-sided aspects both of the heroic self-consciousness and also of modern conceptions of ethics. The heroic consciousness insists in an immediate way that the entirety of the deed be imputed to the doer, and takes responsibility for the action as a whole. But, according to Hegel, the doer here has not yet advanced out of their substantial simplicity 'either to reflection on the distinction between deed and action, between the external events and the purpose and knowledge of the circumstances'.[kk]

Hegel's specific discussion of action in the *Aesthetics* includes a perceptive treatment of the problem of imputation that combines practical-philosophical reflections with a developed poetological-aesthetic perspective. This is well illustrated by the following extremely insightful passage, which undertakes to identify the difference between the ancient and modern worlds. These lines effectively encapsulate the core components of the concept of action as it is unfolded in the *Philosophy of Right*:

> But just as, in the Heroic Age, the subject remains directly connected with his entire willing, acting, and achieving, so he also takes undivided responsibility for whatever consequences arise from his actions. On the other hand, when *we* act or judge actions, we insist that we can only impute an action to an individual if he has known and recognized the nature of his action and the circumstances in which it has been done . . . a man nowadays does not accept responsibility for the whole range of what he has done; he repudiates that part of his act which, through ignorance or misconstruction of the circumstances, has turned out differently from what he had willed, and he enters to his own account only what he knew, and, on the strength of this knowledge, what he did on purpose and intentionally. But the heroic character does not make this distinction; instead he is answerable for the entirety of his act with his whole personality.[ll]

jj. 'Weder in seinem Wissen noch in seinem Wollen lag.' PhR, § 132, Note.

kk. 'Noch nicht zur Reflexion des Unterschieds von Tat und Handlung, der äußerlichen Begebenheit und dem Vorsatze und dem Wissen der Umstände.' PhR, § 118, Note.

ll. 'Wie nun aber im Heroenzustande das Subjekt mit seinem gesamten Wollen, Tun, Vollbringen im unmittelbaren Zusammenhang bleibt, so steht es auch ungeteilt für das ein, was irgend an Folgen aus diesem Tun entspringen. Wenn wir dagegen handeln oder Handlungen beurteilen, so fordern wir, um dem Individuum eine Handlung imputieren zu können, daß es die Art seiner Handlung und die Umstände, unter welchen dieselbe vollbracht wurde, gewußt und erkannt habe [ . . . ] so nimmt der heutige Mensch nicht den gesamten Umfang dessen, was er getan hat, auf sich, sondern er weist den Teil seiner Tat von sich ab, welcher durch ein Nichtwissen oder

It is on the basis of virtue, as the immediate and not yet mediated unity of substantiality and particularity, and out of this independence of spontaneous will and character, that ancient heroes take 'the whole of the action upon themselves'. Oedipus has unknowingly struck down his father, and the *action that can be ascribed to him* was the killing of an aged man, not the murder of a *father*. 'Yet he acknowledges this atrocity in its entirety as his own', even though this lay 'neither in his knowing nor in his willing'. The *heroic* character 'repudiates any division of guilt and knows nothing of *this opposition between subjective intentions and the objective deed and its consequences*'. The subject wishes that 'what has been done, has been entirely done by him alone and that what has happened is completely his own responsibility'.[mm,35] The action of these heroes corresponds to the positive-infinite judgement, which does not yet distinguish the external circumstances of the act from the interior independently specifiable dimension of the agent, and where the external aspect is identified indistinguishably with the inner. Here my deed is identical with my action.

Thus, the agent is the law to himself, in a kind of pre-juridical condition, which is prior to the political state. This means that in the heroic age, in a social structure without publicly established power or authority, the heroic agents cannot be recognised as explicitly *moral* heroes, since the distinction between deed and action has not yet been drawn. Expressed in modern terms, the concept of action has not yet been sufficiently specified or differentiated.[36] The protagonists of the Homeric poems act out of their own exclusive sense of virtue, and in the modern sense must be regarded as *outlaws*. The hero stands up unambiguously and unreservedly for whatever consequences spring from his own deed, and in this sense appears as a natural consequentialist. Modern thought, on the other hand, typically distinguishes, where action and our judgement upon action is concerned, between premeditation, purpose and intention, and the consequences and circumstances of the deed. In order to be able to impute a given action to the individual, we demand that the individual 'has known and recognized the nature of his action and the circumstances under which it has been done'.[nn]

Verkennen der Umstände selber anders geworden ist, als er in seinem Willen lag, und rechnet sich nur das zu, was er gewußt und in Beziehung auf dieses Wissen mit Vorsatz und Absicht vollbracht hat. Der heroische Charakter aber macht diese Unterscheidung nicht, sondern steht für das Ganze seiner Tat mit seiner ganzen Individualität ein.' HW, XIII, 246f.; Knox, I, 187–8.

mm. 'Dennoch erkennt er sich die Gesamtheit dieser Frevel zu . . . will die Schuld nicht teilen und weiß von diesem *Gegensatze der subjektiven Absichten und der objektiven Tat und ihrer Folgen* nichts . . . was es getan hat, ganz und allein getan haben und das Geschehene vollständig in sich hineinverlegen.' HW, XIII, 247; Knox, I, 187–8, emphasis added.

nn. 'Daß es die Art der Handlung und die Umstände unter welchen dieselbe vollbracht wurde, gewußt und erkannt habe.' HW, XIII, 246; Knox, I, 187.

Modern subjects insist upon the right of knowing, for what is at issue here – as Hegel points out with regard to the *Oedipus the King* and the *Oedipus at Colonus* of Sophocles – is 'the right of awakened consciousness, the justification of what man has accomplished through his self-conscious willing in contrast to what he has done unconsciously and without will in accordance with the decision of the gods'. The right of 'our deeper contemporary consciousness' lies in the fact that deeds such as those of Oedipus, since 'they lie neither in our own knowing nor our own willing, cannot be recognized as the deeds of one's own self'.[oo]

This modern position can be described as a *moral* one insofar as purpose and intention in the moral context, the subjective aspect of our knowledge regarding the circumstances and our conviction of the Good, constitute a principal component of action. And Hegel interprets this as a case of progress: in this sense the agent stands up only for his own action, which implies, for example, that the thought of *collective guilt or responsibility* (long before Karl Jaspers) is repudiated in principle, as well as the idea of punishing the *family* of the offending individual. For the agent is now capable of drawing a sharp distinction between the subjective act and the act of the family or community. In an impressive passage, Hegel protests against the notion of somehow simply inheriting merit or blame. The idea that a person 'is simply what his forefathers were, what they suffered or perpetrated' implies an irrational submission to a blind destiny. 'Just as, with us [moderns], the deeds of ancestors do not ennoble their sons and posterity, so the crimes and punishments of our forbears do not dishonour their descendants and still less can they besmirch their subjective character.'[pp] The confiscation of family property, for example, is regarded by Hegel as a form of punishment that violates the principle of deeper subjective freedom, the principle of modernity itself.[37] But Hegel also draws attention to the more plastic character of ancient life as a whole, where the heroic individuals can appear and stand out in a more ideal manner precisely because the substantial character of ethical life is immediately expressed here in individual terms, and the individual is thereby already 'substantial' in himself. This is one aspect of the classical

oo. 'Um das Recht des wachen Bewußtseins, um die Berechtigung dessen, was der Mensch mit selbstbewußtem Wollen vollbringt, dem gegenüber, was er unbewußt und willenlos nach der Bestimmung der Götter getan hat . . . [Das Recht] unseres heutigen, tieferen Bewußtseins . . . [da] sie weder im eigenen Wissen noch im eigenen Wollen gelegen haben, nicht als die Taten des eigenen Selbst anzuerkennen.' HW, xv, 545.

pp. 'Das ist, was seine Väter waren, litten oder verbrachen . . . Wie bei uns [Modernen] die Taten der Ahnen die Söhne und Enkel nicht adeln, so vermehren auch die Verbrechen und Strafen der Vorfahren die Nachkommen nicht und vermögen nur wenig ihren subjektiven Charakter zu beflecken.' HW, XIII, 247–8; Knox, I, 188–9.

form of art, characterised as it is by an intrinsic congruence between the Idea and its sensuous configuration, which has been lost irrevocably in the conditions of modernity. Yet modern art can now also transpose its own ideal forms of art into the age of art and myth in order to mitigate the more prosaic character of modern life, which manifests itself in the development from the way crime and transgression is represented in tragedy right up to the genre of the criminal story. And this change also involves the possibility of a certain reinvention of forms: the modern 'romantic' artist 'must remain entitled to create always anew from what is already there, from history, saga, myths . . . indeed even from materials and situations previously elaborated artistically'.[qq] The material of drama emerges from conflicts involving the crucial powers of social and cultural life which have been challenged or violated – first, by unwitting and unintentional acts (Ajax); secondly, by an intentional and conscious transgression (Agamemnon against Iphigenia, Clytemnestra against Agamemnon, Orestes against Clytemnestra); and, thirdly, through indirect forms of violation.

The story of Orestes, finally, illustrates the distinction between purpose and intention, between imputation in the *first* and *second* sense, which is essential to the question of responsibility. For now the inner aspect of imputability is separated from the deed in its totality, and the action divides into the moments of universality and particularity.[38] Orestes (a) kills his mother, and (b) avenges his father. On the one hand, the right of the husband and ruler is thereby defended, the demand of 'the clear, conscious and self-conscious ethical life', but in these pre-modern conditions, it is the law of particular virtue rather than right as such that prevails. The ensuing chain of vengeance must be broken, for it is based upon the logically deficient pattern of infinite repetition. This transition to the political realm prefigures the thought of a modern political structure where the state alone possesses the monopoly of force and is the only legitimate source of punishment. Hegel also illustrates and confirms this difference between the ancient and the modern world by considering the contrasting treatment of the legendary story of Iphigenia by the ancient authors and by Goethe, and by the different ways in which the Eumenides are interpreted as external or as inner powers. This moral dimension is well brought out in Hegel's remarks on the Eumenides that were quoted earlier: 'it is man's own deed and consciousness that afflicts and torments him insofar as he knows this deed as something evil in

qq. 'Erlaubt bleiben, aus schon vorhandenem, aus der Geschichte, Sage, Mythe . . . ja selbst aus künstlerisch bereits verarbeiteten Stoffen immer von neuem zu schöpfen.' HW, XIII, 281; Knox, I, 216.

him'.[rr] And with specific reference to *Oedipus at Colonus*, Hegel glimpses a kind of inner reconciliation that 'on account of its subjective character comes very close to the modern'.[ss] The heroes presented by Euripides, on the other hand, according to Hegel, 'no longer possess the same intrinsically plastic and ethical character', and in them (as in those of Aristophanes) it is the 'principle of the corruption' of ancient life which clearly comes to the fore.[tt]

*Translated by Nicholas Walker*

## Notes

1. I have developed some of the fundamental concepts involved here in my study, 'Hegels Handlungsbegriff in der praktischen Philosophie und in der Ästhetik', in A. Gethmann-Siefert, H. Nagl-Docekal, E. Rozsa and E. Weisser-Lohmann (eds.), *Hegels Ästhetik als Theorie der Moderne* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2012).
2. Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: rational agency as ethical life* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).
3. Michael Quante, 'Hegel's planning theory of agency', in Arto Laitinen and Constantine Sandis (eds.), *Hegel on Action* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
4. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, in *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, Theorie Werkausgabe. Auf der Grundlage der Werke von 1832–1845, Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (eds.), (hereafter HW) vol. VII (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969ff.), [hereafter PhR]; English translation: *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox, ed. Stephen Houlgate (Oxford University Press, 2008).
5. For a more detailed discussion, cf. Klaus Vieweg, *Das Denken der Freiheit. Hegels Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2012).
6. HW XIII, 230; English translation: *Aesthetics*, 2 vols., trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), I, 174–5.
7. HW XIII, 231; Knox, I, 175–6.
8. For further detailed discussion of this point, cf. Vieweg, *Das Denken der Freiheit*.
9. HW XIII, 232–3; Knox, I, 176–7.
10. 'The person has, for example, a right to have property. In this way the freedom of the will acquires an external form of existence. If this latter is attacked, my will is thereby attacked. That is violence, or coercion. In the latter the permissibility of second coercion is immediately contained.' G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts. Nach der Vorlesungsnachschrift von H. G. Hotho 1822/23*, in G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie 1818–1831*, ed. Karl-Heinz Ilting, 4 vols. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog 1973ff.), vol. 3, 296ff.

rr. 'Es ist die eigene Tat des Menschen und das Bewußtsein, das ihn plagt, peinigt, insofern er diese Tat als Böses in ihm weiß.' HW, XVII, 128.

ss. 'Die ihrer Subjektivität wegen gegen das Moderne hinstreift.' HW, XV, 551.

tt. 'Nicht mehr denselben plastischen sittlichen Charakter an sich . . . das Prinzip des Verderbens.' HW, XII, 318.

11. Compare the passage regarding the 'morality of crimes' in the *Allgemeines Landrecht*, § 16: 'For one who is incapable of acting freely, no crime is committed and thus no punishment is incurred', ALR Th. II, Tit. XX.; Th. II. Tit. XX, §§ 7 and 8.
12. PhR, §§ 100–1.
13. Cf. Georg Mohr, 'Unrecht und Strafe (§§ 82–104)', in Ludwig Siep (ed.), *G. W. F. Hegel. Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000).
14. What Hegel calls 'the right of the hero' is a still merely immediate exercise of right, still an expression of the merely particular will, a form of vengeance rather than a due application of law in the modern sense (Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts. Vorlesung von 1821/22*, ed. H. Hoppe (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2005) (the Kiel transcript), 97.
15. HW XV, 532. Apollo admits to Orestes : 'It was I who moved you to slay the body of your mother', and enjoins him to enter the city of Pallas, where he will find judges who are just. Once the votes have been cast equally in favour of condemnation and of release, it is only the white ballot-stone of Athene that decides in favour of Orestes (and Apollo). 'The direful maidens pursue Orestes on account of his mother's murder which Apollo, the new god, ordered him to commit so that Agamemnon, her slain husband and King, might not remain unavenged.' Here Hegel clearly distinguishes between the Erinyes and the Eumenides, or Kindly Ones (HW XIV, 58; Knox, I, 463). In this regard, the right of the husband and lord is also emphatically defended, or 'the clear, conscious and self-conscious ethical life' (HW XIV, 59; Knox, I, 464). 'It is only the connection between the political and the divine that can accomplish the freeing of Orestes and establish reconciliation in place of retribution. In that the Erinyes are transformed into the Eumenides, the Kindly Ones, tragedy gives way to harmony . . . The realm of injury and blind rage gives rise to helpfulness and benevolence, the Erinyes become the Eumenides . . . Fundamentally speaking, this reconciliation is a victory for reason. For the process of persuasion, the weapon of reason, has brought about the reconciliation in which Athene takes pride . . . Reason now takes the place of Fate and its chain of predestined events' (Walter H. Sokel, *Vorwort zu Orest*, Munich: Langenmüller, 1963, 13–16).
16. G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, HW VIII–X, [hereafter Enc.], § 497.
17. Enc., § 174.
18. Mohr, 'Unrecht und Strafe', 122ff.
19. G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, HW V–VI, here 6, 326; G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, ed. and trans. George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), (hereafter SL) 68–9.
20. PhR, § 104.
21. *Ibid.*, § 124.
22. It has been expressly claimed that Hegel adopts 'a position which is recognisably akin to that of Davidson himself in recent times' (Dudley Knowles, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, London: Routledge, 2002, 174).
23. Enc., § 503.
24. HW XV, 485.
25. On the standpoint of morality 'we find both morality and immorality, just as on the first level we have right and the denial of right' (*Philosophie des Rechts*, ed. Hoppe (Kiel transcript), 104).

26. PhR, § 107.
27. The freedom of the moral will, moral right, consists in the fact that 'something is recognised as good by me' (*Philosophie des Rechts*, ed. Hoppe (Kiel transcript), 102). What is central here is the inner character of willing, which determines itself as particularity.
28. In this regard, cf. Michael Quante, 'Hegel's Planning Theory of Action'. Here Quante describes Hegel's concept of imputation as 'cognitivist ascriptivism' (226); Quante's reference to what he calls 'Hegel's map of our ascriptive practices' is also instructive (224).
29. The *Science of Logic* refers to the 'syllogism of action' and the 'syllogism of the Good' as ways of bringing together and uniting the moments of the concept of action, of subjectivity and objectivity (HW VI, 545f.; SL, 732f.).
30. Cf. Allen Wood, 'Hegel's critique of morality', in Ludwig Siep (ed.), *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Berlin, 2000), §§ 129–41.
31. Hegel understands the urge or impulse (*Trieb*) in general as 'internal self-movement, self-movement proper' (HW VI, 76; SL, 382).
32. Michael Quante, *Hegels Begriff der Handlung* (Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1993), 130ff.
33. Cf. the text of the folk song 'Die Gedanken sind frei': 'I think what I will, I think what pleases me, my wish and my desire none can deny.' The *Allgemeines Landrecht* (Pt III, § 2) provides the relevant juridical formulation with regard to this issue: 'Only external free acts can be circumscribed by laws.'
34. On the concept of 'imputability', cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 476.
35. In his hand-written notes to § 118 of the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel refers to Orestes as a poetic representative of heroic self-consciousness who takes full and unreserved responsibility for his deeds.
36. Cf. Vieweg, *Das Denken der Freiheit*.
37. Ästh., 13, 247–8; Knox, I, 188–9.
38. PhR, § 120, Addition.

3

# Tragedy and the human image: German Idealism's legacy for theory and practice

Allen Speight

What is the legacy of German Idealism for the theory of tragedy? This is a question that calls not only for an exploration of the specific development of the new philosophical importance that tragedy as such came to have in the post-Kantian period, but also for an examination of the *context* in which the philosophy of tragedy more broadly is discussed.

From what perspective, then, are we to assess the theory of tragedy as it develops among the German Idealists? There are indeed many perspectives from which we may view this question: the emergence of a philosophy of 'the tragic' as distinct from a philosophy of tragedy; the tragic role of opposition, which Kantian antinomies, Hölderlinian original separation and Hegelian dialectic all play; the struggle between Fichtean freedom and Spinozist necessity; the 'tragedy of the ethical', as some of Hegel's early writings suggest. I propose to focus primarily on the legacy of Idealism with respect to tragedy as a *dramatic* genre in terms of the reconceived notions of *art and the human image* that underlie the systematic efforts of Hegel and Schelling in their respective *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art*.

As is well known, the claims for tragic drama as a genre for both Hegel and Schelling are nothing if not strong. For both, poetry stands at the height of their constructions of the artistic genres, and dramatic poetry is, in comparison with lyric and epic, the highest form of poetry. Thus, Schelling calls drama 'the highest manifestation of the nature and essence of all art',[a] and Hegel, while praising (as does Schelling) the plasticity of sculpture and making it the cynosure of the classical form, points nonetheless to the superiority

a. 'Die höchste Erscheinung des An-sich und des Wesens aller Kunst.' *Schellings sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856–61), (hereafter SSW), v 687; F. W. J. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), (hereafter PA), 247.

of imaginative poetry and drama in particular because of its ability to represent *action*.[1]

This praise of tragic drama is bound up with a number of issues specific to the two Idealists' systems, but I want to begin with a particular praise both Hegel and Schelling articulate for what we might call the dramatic or presentational side of tragedy (and thus apparently applicable to both tragedy *and* comedy; although, particularly in Schelling, as we will see, it is often hard to tell whether he thinks comedy is something sufficiently different from tragedy to matter philosophically, while Hegel's theory of tragedy is often charged with simply wishing to iron out the hard and irreconcilable side of the tragic in favour of an ultimately comic reconciliation). What Schelling and Hegel want to praise is drama's relation to the *human being* and its artistic representation. Hegel says in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art* that drama is the art in which '*the whole man* presents, by *re*producing it, the work of art produced by man' and that, in dramatic poetry, the whole man is 'fully alive' onstage and 'is himself made into an animated work of art'.[b] Schelling makes similar claims in his *Lectures* about the fullness of human expression possible in the tragic drama: that it is 'only in the human' that we can see the essentially tragic conflict that is the highest subject of art (for him, the conflict between freedom and necessity),[c] and only the dramatic form of poetry that can 'show us the object from all sides, and thus absolutely'.[d]

There are several things we can notice already in these quotations. First of all, they seem to pick up on a stress on the *human as such* that is a central element in Hegel's and Schelling's conceptions of art. For Hegel, the notion of the human being, both as form and content of artistic representation, might be said to be a sort of key to the philosophical construal of art in the

b. 'Der ganze Mensch das vom Menschen produzierte Kunstwerk reproduzierend darstellt.' G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969–71) (hereafter HW), XIV 262; G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) (hereafter Knox), II, 627; HW, XIV, 262; 'der ganze Mensch in voller Lebendigkeit darstellend auftritt und sich selbst zum beseelten Kunstwerke macht.' HW, XV, 218; Knox, II, 955. Cf. the lecture notes from 1826: '[im Drama] ist die Kunst in sich zurückgegangen, das Kunstwerk wird von einem Subjekt produziert und auch von einem wirklichen Menschen zur Vorstellung gebracht, so dass ein Mensch die Materie ist, in welcher das Kunstwerk sich zu erkennen gibt' (1826 ms Kehler, 291) and from 1823: 'Hier wird das ganze Subjekt, welches der Rede muss Existenz geben, die ganze Person des Vortragenden in Anspruch genommen' (ms 1823, 264).

c. 'Im Allgemeinen also ist die menschliche Natur das einzige Mittel der Darstellung jenes Verhältnisses [e.g, das, worin die Notwendigkeit siegt, ohne dass die Freiheit unterliegt, und hinwiederum die Freiheit obsiegt, ohne dass die Notwendigkeit besiegt wird].' SSW, V, 690–1; PA, 249–50.

d. 'So ist sie [die Tragödie] unter den drei Formen der Poesie die einzige, die den Gegenstand von allen Seiten, demnach ganz absolut zeigt.' SSW, V, 707; PA, 26.

most general sense. In the highly concise account of art that appears in the section on art in the 'Absolute Spirit' section of the *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel remarks that the human shape is the 'highest and true' form which art can take up, since 'only in it can the spirit have its corporeity and thus its visible expression'[e] – in its context, a highly important claim on both systematic and philological grounds.[2] As the *Lectures* make amply clear, humanity is the 'centre and content of true beauty and art' because 'the external human form is alone capable of revealing the spiritual in a sensuous way':[f] artistic beauty in its classical shape thus melds human form (*Gestalt*) and content or meaning (*Gehalt*, *Bedeutung*) in a way that effects what Hegel calls the 'interpenetration' (*Durchdringung*) of the two. And this is not to understand art as providing in some accidental way an 'imitation of (human) nature', Hegel claims, but art 'must *of necessity* produce its representations in the form of man's external appearance'.[3]

So deeply does this concern of Hegel's run through the lectures on aesthetics, however, that there appear to be numerous artistic candidates for quintessentially human forms of expression: sculpture, also, is an art which we might think 'presents us with man as he is, with spirit completely in the shape of the body'[g]; we may notice as well Hegel's stresses on the representation of human flesh tone in the section on painting and the importance of the human voice in music, as well as his much-discussed appeal in the section on Romantic art to the *Humanus*, the figure that Hegel calls the 'new holy of holies' – an image of the modern artist as one who has his subject matter in himself, to which nothing human can be alien.[4]

But, as Hegel is quick to acknowledge, both in the passage about sculpture and in many of the other passages about the human form as the centre of art, spirit's own proper essence is not limited to the shape of the human *body* and its representation in art, but has a wider range in 'its expression in speech, deeds and actions, which are the development of its inner life and disclose what it is'[h]; poetry, and especially dramatic poetry, is especially

e. 'Unter den Gestaltungen ist die menschliche die höchste und wahrhafte, weil nur in ihr der Geist seine Leiblichkeit und hiermit anschaubaren Ausdruck haben kann.' HW, X, 367; G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline*, ed. and trans. K. Brinkmann and D. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) (hereafter Enc.) 558.

f. 'Das *Menschliche* . . . [macht] den Mittelpunkt und Inhalt der wahren Schönheit und Kunst aus.' HW, XIV, 18; Knox, I, 432; 'Diese Gestalt ist wesentlich die *menschliche*, weil die Äußerlichkeit des Menschen allein befähigt ist, das Geistige in sinnlicher Weise zu offenbaren.' HW, XIV, 20; Knox, I, 433.

g. 'Sowohl einzelne Statuen als Gruppen geben uns die geistige Gestalt in vollständiger Leiblichkeit, den Menschen, wie er *ist*.' HW, XIV, 352; Knox, II, 702.

h. 'Wenn das Skulpturbild wohl die Natürlichkeit für sich vorauszuhaben scheint, so ist doch gerade diese durch die schwere Materie dargestellte leibliche Äußerlichkeit und Natürlichkeit

suited to capture this side of human action and expression. Classical sculpture in its rendering of the human figure and anthropomorphic gods is thus in a sense 'blind', while the deepest aspiration of beautiful art is for an expressiveness that has – like the mythological figure Argus, Hegel says (in a not unproblematic image) – a thousand eyes.[5]

There is a similar stress on the human in Schelling's aesthetics, albeit in his case more about the internal issue of tragic content, rather than the external issue of tragic drama's presentation: it is the human being as both capable of freedom and yet subject to necessity which gives us the real material for tragedy.[6] And dramatic poetry – in Schelling's scheme, as we will see, the poetic correlate of what sculpture is within the plastic arts – has a privileged status, since it places its objects 'before our very eyes' in a way which does not restrict our perspective and allows the most complete representation of the unity of action.[7]

More specifically, then, we might say, for Hegel and Schelling drama offers a *wholeness*, *fullness* and *completion* of the range of human expression in comparison with other arts. This is an element of drama that runs through both Hegel's and Schelling's philosophies of art, with Hegel stressing especially the *individuality* (both universal and particular together) and Schelling the *dimensionality* and *corporeality* that drama recapitulates from sculpture.

But – particularly for Hegel – there is yet a further element of drama's human expressiveness in a more 'external' sense of artistic representation: it is an art of *performance* that is what it is largely through the living presence of actors performing before a live audience – this element of performativity is shared with music, but in drama, Hegel argues, we look to performers to offer us not just the realm of subjective feeling, but also the objective qualities of their humanness as well. Clearly, then, part of what is connected to this stress on the human, for Hegel, is the greater reflexivity implicit in the ability of an artist like the dramatic actor not only to produce, but to *re*produce a content.

As these initial quotations suggest, Hegel and Schelling see tragic drama in terms of its content as most fully capturing human action and emotion, and Hegel, at least, looks also to its form as an especially reflexive element of artistic agency. How should we then understand this assessment of the tragic drama within the schemes of the Idealists? Why this stress on the image of the human being in its unity? Does it suggest (as many have charged against

nicht die Natur des Geistes als Geistes. Als solcher ist im Gegenteil seine eigentümliche Existenz die Äußerung in Reden, Taten, Handlungen, die sein Inneres entwickeln und ihn zeigen, wie er ist.' HW, xiv 352; Knox, ii, 703. Cf. also HW, xiii, 202–3; Knox, i, 53–4 and HW, xiv, 21–2, Knox, i, 435.

Hegel) that the seriousness of tragedy is downplayed in favour (so go the criticisms) of his demands for the reconciliation of opposition? And what does this consideration of it allow us to say about the approaches that Hegel and Schelling take to tragedy and the arts more broadly?

In what follows, I will explore first (sections I and II) what I take to be the historical and conceptual background shaping the considerations of the tragic in German Idealism; I then take up (in sections III and IV) a range of questions that these approaches raise for an understanding of tragic theory and practice.

In section I, I will argue that the new status of tragedy as a dramatic art needs to be viewed historically in the light of two moments in which the tradition of aesthetic thought has placed tragedy in relation to a scheme of the other arts: on the one hand, the Aristotelian *Poetics*, and, on the other hand, the eighteenth-century attempt to articulate a *system of artistic genres*, a history which takes us back to the initial formulations of the fine arts as such, the *beaux arts*, as these advance through the Renaissance to their canonical shape in the mid-eighteenth century.

In section II, I will argue that the systematic genre project that we see within Hegel's and Schelling's philosophies of art – inheritors, as they are, of both Aristotelian poetics and eighteenth-century aesthetics – is one that is shaped nonetheless around particular post-Kantian philosophical concerns with issues such as the *unity of form and content*.

In section III, I will examine several important questions for the theory and practice of tragedy raised by the Idealist approach. How does this conception make sense of the tragic drama as it is practised? In particular, does the stress on action in considering tragedy as a dramatic art in fact minimise tragic conflict and privilege comedy? What sort of self-awareness of art as such is produced by the dramatic modes and is there a distinctively tragic form of wisdom?

Finally, in section IV, I will (briefly) consider the 'after-life' of this idea of tragedy. What happens to tragedy following its high status among the Idealists? These final considerations return to the related question of the status of the *image of the human being* as such in its relation to art, tragedy and their philosophical construal.

## I. Historical background: tragedy, poetics and the rise of the 'Modern System of the Arts'

The consideration of the tragic drama within a larger systematic scheme of the artistic genres of course predates German Idealism. What is the historical

origin of the philosophical project of comparing the artistic genres within which Hegel and Schelling give the tragic drama such a high status? I am going to differentiate two different schemes under which tragedy appears within a larger scheme of arts that have a bearing on the representation of the human being: one in an older, Aristotelian sense; the other stemming from a series of reflections in the Renaissance and early modern period that lead to what Kristeller has called, in a much-cited pair of articles, the 'Modern System of the Arts'. Both play an important role in the historical background of the Idealists' systematic project with respect to the genres, although, as I will argue, the shifts associated with the second of these represent a particular catalyst for the genre project of Hegel and Schelling, even though their fundamental construal of tragedy as a form of *action* derives from Aristotle.

Up through the seventeenth century, the philosophical context for consideration of tragedy had been one located most often within the tradition of poetics that emerged from Aristotle. This remark needs an immediate qualification concerning the continuity we can associate with this tradition in a post-classical world which did not always have first-hand experience of something like Greek tragic drama – whether by that we mean the secular, somewhat bookish and historically contextual experience that characterised Aristotle's engagement with tragedy in the fourth century BCE, or the more immediate and provocative fifth-century experience with all its social and religious import which so impressed and worried Socrates and Plato. If we think, for example, of Averroes' *Poetics* as the last beachhead of this Aristotelian tradition before the Renaissance, we see a work that is much closer to the study of rhetoric than to the specific problems of tragedy.

But from Aristotle to the rediscovery of the *Poetics* in the Italian Renaissance, we can nonetheless recognise a familiar set of elements that compose an Aristotelian theory of tragedy within a larger account of artistic making. This larger account, as is well known, is not as widely developed as one might like. While Aristotle begins the *Poetics* with distinctions among the arts of mimesis in terms of their means, objects and manner, thus grouping together his interests in the arts under the conceptual concerns he has with the activity of making or *poiēsis*, he is quickly focused on the specific art of the tragic drama and the sorts of organic unity that one may find within it. His analysis is in terms that stress both action or *praxis* as at the centre of tragedy, and the *pathē* of fear and pity as the important result bound up with our construal of this action, and so ultimately and most deeply a particularly important bridge between ethical philosophy and the study of tragedy.

Between the Florentine Renaissance and the post-Kantian period, there occurred, however, the remarkable philosophical explosion that is usually referred to among both philosophers and critics as the 'birth of aesthetics'. Drawing on the new social and cultural importance of artistic activity and reflection on the experience of beauty in sixteenth-century Italy, and then first-order reflection on such experience (especially in the French seventeenth century), the new shape of the aesthetic came to be explored in philosophical texts of the eighteenth century, which understand in a new way the experience of beauty as such – in the writings of British thinkers such as Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Addison – and in fact define for the first time, in Baumgarten, the very word 'aesthetics'.

The importance of these developments, according to Kristeller, runs in a number of directions. I will mention three among his longer list: (1) the marking off of the *fine arts* as such (the *beaux arts*, as distinguished from liberal and mechanical arts – something not always clear in ancient discussions using the Greek *technē* or the Latin *ars*); (2) within the discussion of these fine arts, their systematisation and distinction from one another, resulting in a classificatory scheme of arts – architecture, sculpture, painting, music and poetry – that starts to have canonical status sometime after Batteux's 1746 work *Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe* (who lists the fine arts as music, poetry, painting, sculpture and dance, with architecture and eloquence included as arts which combine pleasure and utility); and (3) correspondingly the marking off of the *beautiful* and the sort of judgements we make about the beautiful in a way that the moral colourations attached to the ancient Greek *kalon* did not always allow, thus paving the way for the three-part distinction among theoretical, moral and aesthetic in Kant's three critiques, and in later work such as Cousin's *The True, the Beautiful and the Good*.[8]

As Kristeller puts it, summarising these synthesising developments:

> only the eighteenth century produced a type of literature in which the various arts were *compared* with each other and discussed on the basis of *common principles*, whereas up to that period treatises on poetics and rhetoric, on painting and architecture and on music had represented quite distinct branches of writing and were primarily concerned with technical precepts rather than with general ideas.[9]

What unity ancient writers did find grouped the various arts under a rubric related to mimesis or imitation, and the eighteenth-century writers turned critical of such mimetic accounts of art. I should mention that there are important counter-views to Kristeller's, for example, in the recent attempt

by Stephen Halliwell to argue for the persistence and resilience of the mimetic tradition even through the early modern period associated with the birth of aesthetics and the criticism of forms of imitation. Halliwell's claim is that the mimesis tradition, charitably interpreted, is not so much interrupted by the eighteenth-century's new reflections on aesthetics as continued by it.[10] There is much to be said on this score, but my concern here is rather with what the upshot of the debate might be for the status of tragedy within the aesthetics of German Idealism. It is true Hegel and Schelling become critics of some of the important aims of this eighteenth-century project. The eighteenth-century concern with the justification of our judgements of taste was not central to their project, and the very title which both give to their lectures on these topics deliberately avoids the term 'aesthetics' and instead insists that what is needed is a 'philosophy of art'.[11] Nevertheless, the Idealist philosophies of art that Hegel and Schelling elaborate are heirs to the earlier systematising work in which the eighteenth-century aestheticians engaged: Hegel and Schelling take over the Kantian triplicity of theoretical, moral and aesthetic, and within their philosophies of art still closely follow the system of five arts that emerged from this early modern systematisation. Thus, both Schelling and Hegel do not need to spend much time defending the inclusion of the five genres of painting, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry that Batteux had listed, and continue the practice of giving a secondary status to important eighteenth-century arts, such as gardening, engraving and the opera. (The comparison here with Aristotle is interesting: there is no Aristotelian treatment of architecture as a fine art, music is, on his view, treated as a kind of poetry and some forms of poetry that are essential to Hegel's and Schelling's list, such as lyric poetry, do not merit particular attention in ancient philosophy.)

So how do these two different historical traditions have an influence on the genre theory that we will see in the philosophies of art of Hegel and Schelling and particularly on the place of *tragedy* within it? On the one hand, as I will make clear in the following section, Hegel and Schelling both come to draw in the most important formal terms on Aristotelian tragedy; and the formal terms of Aristotelian theory clearly concern the notion of the organic unity we can find in the plot-structure and emotional effects of the tragic drama – a notion of unity that is central to Hegel's and Schelling's conception of what the tragic drama is. But in terms of working out tragedy's place as a *genre* among other artistic genres, it may be that the impetus here lies more in the systematic ambitions that arise in eighteenth-century aesthetics, culminating with Kant. The more specific importance of the human being

at the centre of tragic representation will emerge with greater clarity in the next section.

## II. Conceptual issues in placing tragedy within the post-Kantian genre project of Hegel and Schelling

In this section, I want to move from the broad concern with a system of genres in the sense that Kristeller mentions – a comparison not limited to either the visual arts or poetry and which draws on universal considerations – to the specific concern with a system of genres that animated Hegel and Schelling. The organisational structure of both philosophers' *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art* is striking in that they do not simply take over an existing eighteenth-century classificatory scheme, but they seem to make it a particular self-requirement that anything that can call itself a philosophy of art must give an account of how the individual genres have developed and their philosophical relation to one another.

Their project is systematic in a new and distinctive way that stems from the concerns that both have with understanding the importance of art as it relates to the Absolute. And a central systematic element of their treatment of genres rests in fact on an Idealist commitment to the *unity of form and content* in aesthetics.[12] This notion of unity takes different forms for Schelling and for Hegel, but both share a conception about the most visible place to see the unity of form and content: in the portrayal of the Greek gods, where universal and particular are also at one. As Schelling puts it, the Greek gods are neither allegories (where the particular means the universal) nor schematisms (where the universal means the particular), but – in his sense of the term –*symbols*, where universal and particular are one. Athena does not simply *mean* or *stand for* divine wisdom, but in some sense *is* divine wisdom itself *as* a particular god.[13]

This notion of a union of universal meaning (*Bedeutung*) and particular shape (*Gestalt*) lies at the heart of Hegel's notion of the classical ideal of beauty. The two are not 'identical' (or else a specific work of art would have no wider significance) nor do they form some sort of pre-existing unity (as if works or genres were natural kinds), but, in Hegel's term, they 'interpenetrate' one another: each side is already something which is harmonious, and art at its most expressive is the result of the two.[14] As the *Lectures* have it: '*each* of the two sides, the spiritual content and its external appearance', is 'in itself a totality which is the essential nature of the whole'.[i] In terms that stretch

i. 'Jede der Seiten, sowohl der geistige Gehalt als dessen äußere Erscheinung, in sich die Totalität sei, welche den Begriff des Ganzen ausmacht.' HW, XIV, 19; Knox, I, 433.

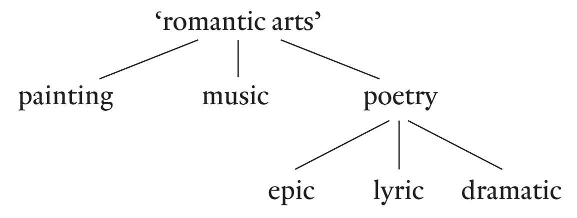
from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* to the later lectures, and that recapitulate formulations in the *Subjective Spirit* criticising views of body and soul as separate *entities*: the human shape in art gives us both a 'lively' or *beseelte* embodiment and a 'clothed' (*bekleidet*) or enfigured soul.[15]

The importance of such a thoroughgoing notion of unity of form and content within the context of artistic genre theory is clear: if the philosophy of art involves a unity of form and content, the necessity to give a systematic account of the specific *media* in which artists may work cannot be overlooked. On this view, a philosophy of art must also take into account important *historical* differentiations as well, although this proves to be less than easy to give organisational form: thus, Hegel's various attempts across the iterations of the lecture series to account for *both* the individual artistic genres and the historically particular forms of art in the symbolic, classical and romantic.

Let us briefly recall how Hegel and Schelling place tragedy within the system of artistic genres as they represent it. Schelling's overall framework is inherently dual, featuring a differentiation between the 'real' or formative arts and the 'ideal' or verbal arts. The real series thus begins with music, moves on to painting and then the plastic arts, with the corresponding verbal arts of lyric, epic and dramatic in direct relation to these (thus stressing lyric's musicality, epic's painterliness and the plastic quality of drama).

| (Real series) | (Ideal series) |
|---|---|
| Formative arts | Verbal arts |
| music | lyric |
| painting | epic |
| plastic arts (architecture/bas relief/sculpture) | dramatic |

Hegel, by contrast, divides the five arts, first, into a triplicity that has resonances with his scheme of symbolic/classical/romantic, and, then, further divides the romantic arts into painting, music and poetry, with the development here (*contra* Schelling) running from epic to lyric and then to the culminating dramatic:




In both cases, dramatic poetry represents the ultimate genre, and each further divides the dramatic: Schelling again differentiating the dual forms of tragedy

and comedy, and Hegel offering between tragic and comic forms a third or 'middle thing', the reconciliation drama.

What can we say about the position of the tragic drama within these systems of the artistic genres? One commonality about their treatment of drama in general we notice is that both Schelling and Hegel take it as important to offer a classificatory scheme that moves between an extreme of plasticity, on the one hand (where, as with sculpture, a visible and external medium is essential), and the forms of art (especially the literary) which have a less tangible medium, on the other. With this oscillation between the plastic and the abstract in mind, Schelling and Hegel work music differently into their schemes, but both clearly look to the drama as offering the most plastic of the literary or poetic modes – one which recapitulates the plastic attractions of the sculptural, as Schelling's scheme especially makes clear, and which Hegel's notion of the drama as peopled by characters who come before us spectators as 'moving statues' likewise emphasises.

As we move to a consideration of *tragic* drama – and what differentiates it from other dramatic forms, such as comedy – we find further questions. Schelling's genre criteria for distinguishing between tragedy and comedy rest on the internal relations between freedom and necessity in what is experienced by the *characters* in the play and not on anything that would more broadly relate the two dramatic forms. Thus, he defines drama in general as a poem where an 'actual and thus objective conflict between the two elements freedom and necessity' occurs, and where both appear as such and both 'emerge from this struggle simultaneously as victorious and vanquished, and accordingly equal in every respect'.[j] If this sounds suspiciously more like tragedy than like comedy, Schelling has no complaint: he fully admits that he has 'from the start deduced drama from tragedy'.[k] And, while Schelling goes on to differentiate tragedy and comedy, his means of doing so are pure reversal: tragedy is where necessity is the object and freedom the subject, whereas in comedy necessity is the subject and freedom the object. This leads him to the interesting claim that since the highest fate can be found in comedy, comedy can in fact be 'the highest tragedy'.[16]

j. 'Es muss in dem Gedicht dieser Art ein wirklicher und demnach objektiver Widerstreit beider, der Freiheit und der Notwendigkeit, da sein, und zwar so dass beide *als solche* erscheinen.' SSW, v, 689; PA; 248; 'Es bleibt also in diesem Widerspruch schon von selbst nichts übrig als dass beide, Notwendigkeit und Freiheit, aus diesem Streit zugleich als siegend und als besiegt, und demnach in jeder Rücksicht *gleich* hervorgehen.' SSW, v, 690; PA, 249.

k. 'Wir haben, wie von selbst klar ist, das Drama gleich unmittelbar als Tragödie abgeleitet.' SSW, v, 693, PA, 251.

As idiosyncratic as this may sound, it is worth emphasising for the sake of our broader comparison how far Schelling's ultimate claim about this internal differentiation correlates with Hegel's stress on how the *human* comes before us in the tragic drama. 'In general,' Schelling says, '*human nature* is the only means of representation' for the relationship in which we can see freedom and necessity dramatically (or tragically) related.[l]

If we look now at Hegel's differentiation between tragedy and comedy, we notice a somewhat more worked-out distinction that gives comedy more its due: for Hegel, there is a substantial conflict (most frequently in Greek tragedy between family and city) that characterises tragedy and the conflict of subjectivity that is comic, while the reconciliation drama is described as a sort of 'middle thing' or 'centre' (*Mitte*) between tragedy and comedy.[m] Hegel has what we may call an *enactive* view of tragedy in that the performance is crucial to what tragedy is. Like Aristotle, he holds that tragedy is *about action*, but for Hegel this is not just a point about the centrality of plot, but also a point about the centrality of performance. Aristotle thought that one could conceptually grasp and cathartically experience tragedy in one's own study just by reading; for Hegel, by contrast, it is essential that a tragic drama is something that is meant to be experienced in the theatre, before an audience.[17] As he puts it in the *Lectures*: 'We saw that a drama presents to us live the whole development of a complete and specific action, and therefore it imperatively needs a fully visible presentation, and this can only be given artistically by actual performance in the theatre' and not just by means of reading.[n]

This stress on drama as a form of enactment can lead us to a further important point about the Idealists' views of tragedy. We saw that the form/content considerations behind Schelling's and Hegel's genre construals help to determine their focus on what happens within tragic drama rather than, say, an audience's emotional response. This might tempt us to claim that they are content-centred rather than emotion-centred views of tragedy, that they

l. 'Im Allgemeinen also ist die menschliche Natur das einzige Mittel der Darstellung jenes Verhältnisses [e.g., das, worin die Notwendigkeit siegt, ohne dass die Freiheit unterliegt, und hinwiederum die Freiheit obsiegt, ohne dass die Notwendigkeit besiegt wird].' SSW, v, 690–1; PA, 249–50 (added emphasis).

m. 'In der *Mitte* nun zwischen der Tragödie und Komödie steht eine *dritte* Hauptart der dramatischen Poesie, die jedoch von weniger durchgreifender Wichtigkeit ist, obschon sich in ihr der Unterschied des Tragischen und Komischen zu vermitteln strebt oder beide Seiten wenigstens, ohne sich als einander schlechthin entgegengesetzt zu isolieren, zusammentreten und ein konkretes Ganzes ausmachen.' HW, xv, 530; Knox, ii, 1202.

n. 'Das Drama, indem es eine abgeschlossene Handlung in deren gegenwärtiger Entwicklung vorüberführt, bedürfe wesentlich einer vollständig sinnlichen Darstellung, welche sie kunstgemäß erst durch die wirkliche theatralische Exekution erhält.' HW, xv, 518; Knox, ii, 1192.

take the stress of Aristotle's definition of tragedy in terms of *praxis* or action rather than in terms of *pathos* or emotion. But that would miss an important formal element of both their theories which should be remarked: that each construes their approach to tragedy *also* in formal terms that correspond to those of the Aristotelian catharsis of emotions or *pathē*. Hegel, for example, goes out of his way to give an 'objective' reading of the notion of *pathos*: Aristotle did not mean by *pathos* just subjective feelings (such as fear and pity), but rather the objective structure of motivation in action that we can discover in the great tragic characters. For Hegel (as for probably no other reader of Aristotle), Antigone's *pathos is* the family; Creon's *is* the city. In Schelling's case, although he insists that his interest is in the 'catharsis of reason' and not just in Aristotle's 'catharsis of the understanding', the effect Aristotle associates with tragic catharsis is 'the basis for the reconciliation [*Versöhnung*] and harmony [*Harmonie*] residing in . . . tragedy, the reason it does not devastate us, but rather leaves us feeling healed [*geheilt*] and, as Aristotle says, cleansed [*gereinigt*, Schelling's reading of catharsis]'.[o] Hegel and Schelling, then, just as Lessing and Goethe before them, take the *Poetics* as a central textual point of reference for the discussion of all things tragic, both the side of action and the side of *pathos*.[18]

Hegel's and Schelling's interpretation of Aristotelian *pathos* may, of course, seem to us on balance as idiosyncratic as Schelling's claim that comedy can be the 'highest tragedy', but in light of the quotations with which I started, it is worth emphasising how much the stress in each case is on the tragic drama as representing the *complete human being* – in Schelling's more internal sense, in terms of the conflict between freedom and necessity that can exist nowhere outside the human being, and in Hegel's internal and external sense that what tragedy allows us to have a sense of in the fullest possible way is what human beings are like when they are in the midst of genuine action.

So our consideration of the place of tragic drama within the broader system of genres leads us back to the question with which we began. What does it mean that tragedy presents us with the 'whole human being', and how did such a standard emerge within Idealist philosophy of art?

We can get some perspective on this standard of the 'whole human being' by looking at a remark in Hegel's introduction to his *Lectures*, one that appears in the standard edition with the title 'Historical Deduction of the True Concept of Art'.[19] In this section, Hegel shows how the task of

o. 'Dies ist der Grund der Versöhnung und der Harmonie, die in ihnen liegt, dass sie uns nicht zerrissen, sondern geheilt, und wie Aristoteles sagt, gereinigt zurücklassen.' SSW, v, 697; PA, 254.

systematic Idealist philosophy of art arose in the context of the post-Kantian philosophical world. Hegel stresses what he takes to be both the achievement and the insufficiency of Kant's approach to aesthetics: on the one hand, Kant 'brought the reconciled contradiction [between reason and sense] before our minds', particularly in the unity of the intuitive understanding. Yet, on the other hand, Kant 'makes this dissolution and reconciliation itself into a purely *subjective* one again, not one absolutely true and actual'.[p] While the *Critique of Judgment* offers, then, 'the starting point for the true comprehension of the beauty of art, yet only by overcoming Kant's deficiencies could this comprehension assert itself as the higher grasp of the true unity of necessity and freedom, particular and universal, sense and reason'.[q]

Hegel sees in Schiller's famous definition of beauty as 'freedom in appearance' a development beyond Kant to a 'genuinely actual' mutual formation (*Ineinsbildung*) of the rational and the sensuous, and places the importance of that definition in the context of moral agency. Hegel cites the central image of the fourth of Schiller's *Letters on Aesthetic Education* (and the following quotation is Hegel's discussion of this image):

> The chief point from which Schiller starts is that every individual man bears within himself the capacity for ideal manhood. This genuine man, he holds, is represented by the State which he takes to be the objective, universal, and as it were canonical, form in which the diversity of individual persons aims at collecting and combining itself into a unity. Now he thought that there were two ways of presenting how man, living in time, might correspond with man in the Idea: on the one hand, the State, as the genus of ethics, law, and intelligence, might cancel individuality; on the other hand, the individual might raise himself to the genus, and the man of time ennoble himself into the man of the Idea.[r]

p. 'Und so hat denn Kant den versöhnten Widerspruch wohl in die Vorstellung gebracht, doch dessen wahrhaftes Wesen weder wissenschaftlich entwickeln noch als das wahrhaft und allein Wirkliche dartun können. Weiter drang freilich Kant noch vorwärts, insoweit er die geforderte Einheit in dem wiederfand, was er den *intuitiven Verstand* nannte; aber auch hier bleibt er wieder beim Gegensatz des Subjektiven und der Objektivität stehen, so daß er wohl die abstrakte Auflösung des Gegensatzes von Begriff und Realität, Allgemeinheit und Besonderheit, Verstand und Sinnlichkeit und somit die Idee angibt, aber diese Auflösung und Versöhnung selber wiederum zu einer nur *subjektiven* macht, nicht zu einer an und für sich wahren und wirklichen.' HW, XIII, 83–4; Knox, I, 57.

q. 'Sie [*Die Kritik der Urteilskraft*] macht den Ausgangspunkt für das wahre Begreifen des Kunstschönen, doch konnte dieses Begreifen sich nur durch die Überwindung der Kantischen Mängel als das höhere Erfassen der wahren Einheit von Notwendigkeit und Freiheit, Besonderem und Allgemeinem, Sinnlichem und Vernünftigem geltend machen.' HW, XIII, 88; Knox, I, 60–1.

r. 'Schiller geht darin von dem Hauptpunkte aus, daß jeder individuelle Mensch in sich die Anlage zu einem idealischen Menschen trage. Dieser wahrhafte Mensch werde repräsentiert durch den

It is this latter process, of course, which becomes Schiller's project within the *Letters* as a whole. What is interesting to us in this context is Schiller's grounding of the project and what Hegel may have taken from it. If we turn back to Schiller's Fourth Letter, we notice a remarkable theoretical framework for this image, one which (as often in Schiller) draws on Kant, but goes somewhat further. Schiller says: 'It is true that on a partial *moral* estimate this distinction [between individual human being and pure universal] disappears, for Reason is satisfied when her law alone prevails unconditionally; but on a complete *anthropological* estimate, in which content counts as well as form, and living feeling at the same time has a voice, the distinction is all the more evident'.[s] Mere or pure reason thus gives us a partial and merely *formal* perspective on the human being and his or her potential for improvement, whereas what should interest us – if we are to understand the potential in the project of aesthetic education – is what Schiller calls the 'anthropological' perspective, a term that came initially from his early medical research.[20]

Schiller's contrast between, on the one hand, the narrow, partial and formal view of the human being from the perspective of reason and, on the other hand, the perspective of the human being which anthropology and the aesthetic may afford, one in which content counts as well as form, might be read as something of an underlying manifesto for the Idealist project with respect to art that Schelling and Hegel both take up. At least that seems to be Hegel's narrative of the development of the philosophy of art in this section: for he links directly the *aspiration* of Schiller with the *achievement* of Hegel's own – and, remarkably for once (given the paucity of Hegel's references to him in the *Aesthetics* and elsewhere) – also Schelling's philosophy. To quote Hegel again:

> This *unity* of universal and particular, freedom and necessity, spirit and nature, which Schiller grasped scientifically as the principle and essence of art and which he laboured unremittingly to call into actual

Staat, der die objektive, allgemeine, gleichsam kanonische Form sei, in der die Mannigfaltigkeit der einzelnen Subjekte sich zur Einheit zusammenzufassen und zu verbinden trachte. Nun ließen sich zweierlei Arten vorstellen, wie der Mensch in der Zeit mit dem Menschen in der Idee zusammentreffe; einerseits nämlich in der Weise, daß der Staat als die Gattung des Sittlichen, Rechtlichen, Intelligenten die Individualität aufhebe, andererseits so, daß das Individuum sich zur Gattung erhebe und der Mensch der Zeit sich zu dem der Idee veredle.' XIII, 89–90.

s. 'Zwar in der einseitigen moralischen Schätzung fällt dieser Unterschied hinweg; denn die Vernunft ist befriedigt, wenn ihr Gesetz nur ohne Bedingung gilt; aber in der vollständigen anthropologischen Schätzung, wo mit der Form auch der Inhalt zählt und die lebendige Empfindung zugleich eine Stimme hat, wird derselbe desto mehr in Betrachtung kommen.' *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen, in einer Reihe von Briefen*, IV (added emphasis).

> life by art and aesthetic education, has now, as the *Idea itself*, been made the principle of knowledge and existence, and the Idea has become recognized as that which alone is true and actual. Thereby philosophy has attained, with Schelling, its absolute standpoint; and while art had already begun to assert its proper nature and dignity in relation to the highest interests of mankind, it was now that the *concept* of art, and the place of art in philosophy was discovered, and art has been accepted . . . in its high and genuine vocation.[t]

Hegel in other words seems to be endorsing an historical narrative according to which the concern with the human being as such, the 'genuine' human being, is opened up because of the concerns with unity that Kant first, as the inheritor of the eighteenth-century projects in the new study of aesthetics, and Schiller thereafter attempted to pursue. (And it is worth remembering just as background in this context the significance of Kant's own language regarding the human image: his insistence in the *Critique of Judgment* that the ideal of the beautiful can only be expected in the human figure (§ 17) and the very location of Kant's pre-critical aesthetic writings in lectures devoted to the topic of anthropology – however differently understood from Schiller's notion.)

There are some important qualifications that need to be made to the reading I have offered (for one thing, Schiller is elsewhere much more dismissive of the role of content than are Schelling and Hegel, and his own reflections on the art he practised most – the drama – move often in other directions), but we still need to emphasise that – on *Hegel's* view of the history of the idea of the aesthetic in the post-Kantian world – it is precisely the Kantian and Schillerian *impulse* to human unity in the art work that lies beneath the concern with the Absolute, behind the concern with the systematic philosophy of art, and the concern with the 'whole human being' as such.

t. 'Diese *Einheit* nun des Allgemeinen und Besonderen, der Freiheit und Notwendigkeit, der Geistigkeit und des Natürlichen, welche Schiller als Prinzip und Wesen der Kunst wissenschaftlich erfaßte und durch Kunst und ästhetische Bildung ins wirkliche Leben zu rufen unablässig bemüht war, ist sodann *als Idee selbst* zum Prinzip der Erkenntnis und des Daseins gemacht und die Idee als das allein Wahrhafte und Wirkliche erkannt worden. Dadurch erstieg mit *Schelling* die Wissenschaft ihren absoluten Standpunkt; und wenn die Kunst bereits ihre eigentümliche Natur und Würde in Beziehung auf die höchsten Interessen des Menschen zu behaupten angefangen hatte, so ward jetzt auch der *Begriff* und die wissenschaftliche Stelle der Kunst gefunden und sie, wenn auch nach einer Seite hin noch in schiefer Weise (was hier zu erörtern nicht der Ort ist), dennoch in ihrer hohen und wahrhaften Bestimmung aufgenommen.' HW, XIII, 90–1; Knox, I, 62–3.

## III. Tragedy, comedy and reflexivity

What conclusions can be drawn from this connection between Kant's, Schiller's and Hegel's image of the 'whole human being' concerning the notion of *tragedy*? One question that immediately arises is whether, in taking this dramatic and dimensional view, tragedy has not become melded with comedy and other forms of drama. Does Schelling and even Hegel, despite his more careful delineation of the dramatic genres, just give us a theory of the drama itself, rather than a theory that captures the tragic?

One possible answer to this question in the case of Hegel is that in the end comedy – and a reconciliation of tragic opposition – is indeed the highest form of art. And there is much that substantiates this view. Yet I think the connection between drama and the complete dimensionality of the human being may lead us in a somewhat different direction if we focus not simply on what we might call the 'subject matter' of tragedy – the oppositions between family and city well known in Hegel's reading of the *Antigone*, for example – and their ultimate 'Hegelian' reconciliation, but rather on the agency or performativity that seems inherent in Hegel's notion of drama. This side of Hegel's account is often overlooked: as Martin Donougho has pointed out, there are, for example, many more readings of Antigone's tragic situation in chapter VI of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* than of the meta-issues involved in Hegel's analysis of tragic language in the context of the 'Religion of Art' in chapter VII, which stresses above all the reflexive and performative potentials in tragic drama.[21]

It is one of the advantages particularly of Hegel's theory of the tragic drama, I argue, that it *both* takes account of something that is distinctly tragic *and* at the same time makes clear the role of tragedy in the transition within the dramatic form to a world in which all of the comic themes – self-awareness of spectator and actor, independence and subjectivity of the individual – become part of the development beyond the classical ideal to the more prosaic and more comic self-reflective bourgeois landscape of modernity. That transition is effected, in Hegel's terms, by an 'unmasking' – the removal in comedy of the 'mask' associated with Athenian tragedy. To return to the imagery that we have seen used in this regard: if Hegel sees tragedy, construed in terms of an art of 'moving statues', as the fullest exemplification of 'ensouled embodiment' or 'clothed soul', then such an unmasking would seem to open the possibility of an end of dramatic masking or figuration when the actor/agent appears on the stage *in propria persona*. And yet, as Hegel makes clear, this 'theatricality' does not itself disappear, even if classical

tragic drama as an art – and the 'art religion' of the Greeks in general – comes to an end.

The tension between artistic masking or figuration (*Bekleidung*) and artistic meaning (*Bedeutung*) might be expressed in terms of a tension between a *sculptural ideal* (perfect 'interpenetration' of meaning and figuration) and a *tragic ideal* (the distance we may have on figuration in general as we see the death of heroes and the transition to a form of religion that moves beyond the religion of art). This tension remains deeply present in Hegel's treatment of art and offers two elements that are not simply subsumed into a larger comic or ironic grasp of the ultimate significance of art.

The continuing presence of this tension means, on the one hand, that Hegel retains what we might call a *sculptural ideal of tragedy*. Comedy may be the window to the post-classical future, but there remains something in Hegel's account of the 'moving statues' of tragedy that, like those discussed in the section on 'blind' sculpture, are 'seen yet not seeing' – that is to say, tragic agents who do not yet have the full privilege of irony (in either world-historical or other forms). Even the most knowing (tragic) agents act in a way which is not fully clear to them – and must come to understand what they have done only retrospectively. This position of the non-ironically informed tragic character seems essential to a view of tragedy as distinct from the unmasked self-recognition possible in comedy, and Hegel, I think, genuinely understood this, even if the trajectory of world-historical irony must continue on its way.[22]

But Hegel also has what we might call a *tragic ideal of sculpture* – an account of the ideal of perfect interpenetration that nonetheless notices how the ideal of classical art, even in its most fully realised form, is not the final moment in the Western trajectory of art and religion. Many readers have puzzled over the image that appears, curiously, at the conclusion of the introduction of the classical gods of Greece in the section on 'The Ideal of the Classical Form of Art' of classical beauty in Hotho's edition of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics.[23] After having argued for the notion of beautiful individuality and repose that characterises the Greek gods in their sculptural splendor as they manifest both a 'loftiness' [*Hoheit*] or inwardness and a corporeality, a remarkable illustration of this sculptural unity of universal and particular is adduced: Christian Daniel Rauch's recently completed bust of Goethe.[24] This bust shows

> the firm, powerful and timeless spirit which, in the mask of encircling mortality, is on the point of letting this veil fall away, and still lets it

> just hang freely around. In a similar way, the gods, too, in virtue of this lofty freedom and spiritual peace, appear as raised above their body so that they feel their shape, their limbs, as if they were a superfluous appendage, amidst all the beauty and perfection of their figures. And yet the whole shape is vitally enclosed, identical with spiritual being, without any division . . . the spirit neither escaping the body nor emergent from it, but both one solid whole out of which the inwardness of the spirit quietly peeps in the wonderful certainty of itself.[u]

A strange figure, indeed: a sculptural portrait of a modern artist with a tragic mordancy as the representation of the highest expression of classical art. The edited version of the lectures goes on to say that such a loftiness of spirit is 'the breath and air of affliction which gifted [*geistreich*] men have felt in the ancient pictures of the gods even in their consummate beauty and loveliness'. We might take this as an image of the distance we have both on the classical ideal and also on the human image as rendered by art: the point of insight in this image comes through the productive agency of *geistreich* modern artists (Goethe, in his appropriation of the classic, but also the perspective we have on Goethe through Rauch). This perspective at once on the enfiguration and depopulation of heaven, so central to Hegel's notion of Greek art, as well as on the activity of art itself, is certainly one rendered in a tragic key and (despite the reference to the 'wonderful certainty of itself' in the last line) not in the end comic 'theatricality', although it is another of Hegel's endlessly reflective images of art and artistic activity.[25] As such, it suggests strongly the possibility of a distinctively *tragic* self-awareness that can emerge in the context of human artistic activity.[26]

## IV. The tragic drama in theory and practice: questions and consequences of the Idealist view

How should we understand what has happened over the last two centuries to the art of the tragic drama that stands at the centre of the Idealists' view

u. 'Es ist der feste, gewaltige, zeitlose Geist, der, in der Maske der umherhängenden Sterblichkeit, diese Hülle herabfallen zu lassen im Begriff steht und sie nur noch lose um sich frei herumschlendern läßt. In der ähnlichen Weise erscheinen auch die Götter von seiten dieser hohen Freiheit und geistigen Ruhe über ihre Leiblichkeit erhoben, so daß sie ihre Gestalt, ihre Glieder bei aller Schönheit und Vollendung gleichsam als einen überflüssigen Anhang empfinden. Und dennoch ist die ganze Gestalt lebendig beseelt, identisch mit dem geistigen Sein, trennungslos, ohne jenes Auseinander des in sich Festen und der weicheren Teile, der Geist nicht dem Leib entgehend und entstiegen, sondern beide ein gediegenes Ganzes, aus welchem das Insichsein des Geistes nur in der wunderbaren Sicherheit seiner selbst still herausblickt.' HW, XIV, 84; Knox, I, 484.

of aesthetics – and to the view of the human image bound up with it? Does the high praise accorded the tragic drama by Hegel and Schelling in their lectures in the first third of the nineteenth century sound, in retrospect, like the high watermark of an aesthetic tradition reaching its apex, or the opening of a new direction in the theory and practice of the tragic drama?

The nineteenth- and twentieth-century after-currents of the Idealists' consideration of tragedy run in many directions, but most of them seemingly away from the notion of tragedy as conceived by Hegel and Schelling. Nietzsche's remark that it is pathos and not action that lies underneath tragedy opens a conversation that has moved from poetics to music. The latter half of the nineteenth century features the development of other literary forms – the great Russian novel comes to mind – which have the ethical and aesthetic prominence for that time period that drama had had for fifth-century BCE Athens or, arguably, for the Jena and Weimar of 1800. (It is striking that the two great theorists of the nineteenth-century novel who share some common vision with Hegel's notion of the demotic idioms of the *Prosa der Welt* – Bakhtin and Lukács – seem to see more continuity with either Hegel's comic vision or a notion of re-imagined Hegelian epic in the Russian novel than with his view of tragedy.) Finally, the horrors of war and the degradation of the human image suffered in the past century have often seemed to require the expression of isolation and pain possible in the interiority of lyric rather than in the public realm of the stage.

Yet, if Hegel is right that genres are not fixed forms existing apart from attempts at expression within them, there are important grounds for not thinking of a genre such as the tragic drama as something that is merely past with no relevance for future artistic creativity. Two examples come to mind. The first is Dieter Henrich's suggestion of being able to find in *drama* a certain image of the possibility of postmodern, post-Romantic art, particularly in the fact that he understood, following Hegel, that the post-Romantic artist's attitude towards his work bore an interesting correlation to the dramatist's encounter with a range of different and strange characters that he brings to life on the stage. Henrich focused thus on the role of the *dramatist*, who is, of course (to go back to my quotations at the start of this essay), the self-aware figure that emerges out of this re-presentation of the complete human being.[27] The second point is that the Idealists' genre classifications suggest that we look more broadly at the notion of drama as capturing the greatest range of dimensions, the fullest range of represented action in a way that does not reduce artistic consideration to a single flat frame (as in Greenberg's modernist formalism), or in terms of virtual

and impersonal art (as in postmodernist collages of the sort that Danto discusses).

These considerations – on the one hand, of the dramatist's power over diverse material and, on the other hand, of what we might call the drama's potential for multimedia work – lead to a final thought about how we should assess the relation between tragedy and the human image in our own time. It is well known that our age is one in which the human image – whether we look to the supposed 'art' of corpses posed within museum installations or to the peculiar 'technē' of invasive imaging technologies in airports – is often seen in reductive terms which deny human dimensionality and action. With this in mind, we might say that in the end the most important legacy of Hegel and Schelling for a consideration of the tragic drama might be that drama, as its etymology suggests, is most deeply *about action* and in this sense brings before us 'the complete human being'. This originally Aristotelian etymological point – framed nonetheless, as I have argued, within an organisational scheme whose animus Hegel and Schelling owe to a longer eighteenth-century project leading to the Kantian and Schillerian aspiration towards a unified image of the human being within aesthetics – may still offer our age some wisdom that is distinctively tragic.

## Notes

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969–71) (hereafter HW), xiv, 352–3; G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) (hereafter Knox), ii, 703. For discussion of the issues involved in the chapter as a whole, I am grateful to suggestions by many participants at the Cambridge conference, and especially to Karl Ameriks, Nick Boyle, Stephen Houlgate, Christoph Jamme and Fred Rush.
2. The eight short paragraphs on art that emerge in the final (1830) edition of the *Encyclopaedia* are, of course, of high systematic importance, since they come in the context of Hegel's most mature and concise articulation of the relation among the forms of Absolute Spirit (art, religion and philosophy). But, given the textual difficulties inherent in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art* – where we must rely on lecture notes transcribed by students and an edition put together by Hegel's student Hotho – these remarks in the *Encyclopaedia* are especially useful for getting a sense, without the filter of others' redaction, of Hegel's own strongest priorities in the philosophy of art.
3. This is, in part, Hegel's answer to the pre-eighteenth-century tradition of construing art in terms of the 'imitation of nature': on the earlier view, claims Hegel, it is simply a matter of contingency that art imitated the human form, as opposed to something else in nature. ('Der gewöhnlichen Ansicht nach erscheint jedoch dies Aufnehmen und Nachbilden als eine Zufälligkeit, wogegen zu behaupten ist, daß die zu ihrer Reife gediehene Kunst der

Notwendigkeit nach habe in der Form der äußeren menschlichen Erscheinung darstellen müssen, weil der Geist nur in ihr das ihm gemäße Dasein im Sinnlichen und Natürlichen erhält': HW, XIV, 22; Knox, I, 434.)

4. HW, XIV, 236–7; Knox, I, 607.
5. 1826 ms (Kehler), 324; HW, XIV, 202; Knox, I, 153. On the comparison between sculpture and drama, see Stephen Houlgate, 'Hegel on the Beauty of Sculpture', in Stephen Houlgate (ed.), *Hegel and the Arts* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 56–89; Benjamin Rutter, *Hegel on the Modern Arts* ( Cambridge University Press, 2010). Houlgate argues that, given Hegel's classical ideal, sculpture is the 'purest' expression of beauty, while Greek tragedy must nonetheless be 'the most concrete and developed' form of art (58); Rutter argues that sculpture's purity in fact makes it a candidate for being 'more perfect' as an art form than tragedy: although tragedy can portray courses of action and is therefore richer and deeper in content, its lack of 'formal self-sufficiency' (e.g., the reliance on various artistic modes, including language, gesture, costume, etc.) deprives it of the greater formal beauty of sculpture.
6. SSW, V, 690; PA, 249.
7. SSW, V, 707; PA, 261.
8. Victor Cousin, *Du vrai, du beau et du bien* (Paris: Didier, 1853).
9. 'The modern system of the arts: a study in the history of aesthetics', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12(4) (October 1951), 497 (articles as a whole: 12(4) (October 1951), 496–527; and 13(1) (January 1952), 17–46).
10. Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: ancient texts and modern problems* (Princeton University Press, 2002). See also recent criticism of Kristeller's claims that the modern arts form a *system* by James I. Porter, 'Is art modern? Kristeller's "modern system of the arts" reconsidered', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 49(1) (2009), 1–24, and a response by Peter Kivy, 'What *really* happened in the eighteenth century: the "modern system" re-examined (again)', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 52(1) (January 2012), 61–74.
11. Hegel does allow the term 'aesthetics', but carefully distinguishes his approach from the eighteenth-century discussion of taste (HW, XIII, 12; Knox, I, 1).
12. For a helpful discussion of this point, see Rachel Zuckert, 'The aesthetics of Schelling and Hegel', in Dean Moyar (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Nineteenth Century Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 165–93.
13. SSW, V, 407; PA, 46.
14. For a discussion of some of the difficulties involved with these claims, see Raymond Geuss, 'Response to Paul de Man', *Critical Inquiry* 10(2) (December 1983), 375–82.
15. When Hegel stresses the importance of the human form for his aesthetics in the *Encyclopaedia* discussion of art (Enc., 558), he directly references the paragraph on the relation between body and soul in the Anthropology (Enc., 411).
16. SSW, V, 713; PA, 264.
17. As Otto Pöggeler has stressed, however, Hegel – for important historical and hermeneutical reasons – did not advocate the view that one should somehow be able to see, for example, a tragedy of Sophocles under the conditions of its 'original' form of theatrical presentation. The form in which Hegel saw most tragedies was, in fact, the opera (Pöggeler, *Schicksal und Geschichte: Antigone im Spiegel der Deutungen und Gestaltungen seit Hegel und Hölderlin*, Munich: Fink, 2004).

18. On Goethe's notion of catharsis and appropriation of Aristotle, see Nicholas Boyle, 'Goethe's theory of tragedy', *Modern Language Review* 104(5) (October 2010), 1072–86.
19. While the title of this section may be an editorial addition, the subject matter is clearly attested by notes from the 1820 and 1826 lectures. For a discussion of this section, see Allen Speight, 'Hegel and the "historical deduction" of the concept of art', in Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur (eds.), *Blackwell Companion to Hegel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 353–68.
20. For more on this topic, see Frederick C. Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: a re-examination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).
21. See the thoughtful discussion of these two sides of tragedy in Martin Donougho, 'The pragmatics of tragedy', *Idealistic Studies*, 36(3) (2006), 153–68.
22. My take on this issue is thus different from that of Christoph Menke, *Tragödie im Sittlichen. Gerechtigkeit und Freiheit nach Hegel* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1996), and *Die Gegenwart der Tragödie: Versuch über Urteil und Spiel* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2005).
23. See, most recently, Michael Fried's remarks on this passage, available at: http://nonsite.org/issues/issue-2/michael-fried-three-poems.
24. Presumably Rauch's bust now in Leipzig.
25. I have in mind such passages as the description of the maiden who hands on the 'fruit' of classical art in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (§ 753), as well as Hegel's several equations of tragic characters with artists (PhG, 697, 733; Knox, I, 360–1).
26. Cf. Terry Pinkard's discussion of art's failure to express what it means for a finite, embodied human to be free ('Symbolic, classical, and romantic art', in Stephen Houlgate (ed.), *Hegel and the Arts* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 18).
27. Dieter Henrich, 'Art and philosophy of art today: reflections with reference to Hegel', trans. David Henry Wilson *et al.*, in Richard E. Amacher and Victor Lange (eds.), *New Perspectives in German Literary Criticism: a collection of essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 107–33, is a translation of Henrich's original essay in *Poetik und Hermeneutik*, eds. R. Koselleck and W. D. Stempel, vol. 2 (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1966), 11–33, 524–33.

4

# Romanticism as literary Idealism, or: a 200-year-old way of talking about literature

Stefan Matuschek

Those who sat in the main auditorium of the University of Göttingen on 8 and 9 November 2006 heard the following from the internationally renowned German author Daniel Kehlmann: 'There is no professionalism in writing . . . Don't believe what any professor of poetry says.'[a] Even though Kehlmann uttered these words in the role of a poetry professor, the message cannot have surprised his audience. The view that authorship is not just something to be learned and executed in accordance with rules, is very well established. Indeed, Kehlmann would have surprised his audience much more if, without further ado, he had taken on the role of a poetry professor, and set out to explain and teach in a straightforwardly comprehensible way how to do literature. Questions about literature as Art point us to a realm way beyond the technical demands of its production; it has entirely disconnected itself from the perspective of such an aesthetic. On what, then, has it oriented itself instead? There were no surprises in the received wisdom to be heard from Kehlmann in the Göttingen auditorium. Formal perfection, he said, does not suffice for literature. Rather, there must 'be an element of existential truth, a touching upon foundational facts of our existence. [Literature] must say something about us as human beings.'[b] Moreover, human beings are actually dependent on literature saying something to them as Art, for, as Kehlmann notes, a world in which art plays no role is 'actually inhumane'.[c] Where the author speaks about his own métier – Kehlmann's remarks were made under the title 'lectures on poetics' – he speaks in a wholly

a. 'Es gibt keine Professionalität beim Schreiben . . . Glauben Sie keinem Poetikdozenten.' Daniel Kehlmann, *Diese sehr ernsten Scherze. Poetikvorlesungen* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007), 5.

b. 'Ein Element existenzieller Wahrheit . . . eine Berührung mit den Grundtatsachen unseres Daseins. [Literatur] muß etwas über uns als Menschen sagen.' *Ibid.*, 12.

c. 'Eigentlich inhuman', *Ibid.*, 40.

non-technical manner about the fundamental questions of humanity. Where he ought to be giving information as a representative of his craft, he denies any particular professionalism and slides off instead into general philosophy of art. The author who was supposed to be explaining his métier undergoes a metamorphosis into a philosopher who speaks of literature as a fundamental issue of humanity.

Kehlmann is not, however, a self-confessed adherent of German neo-humanism, or of the classical German philosophy of Art with which the theses of his lectures on poetics might easily be linked. Even their title suggests such a connection: *these very serious jokes* is what Kehlmann calls them, quoting the 82-year-old Goethe's characterisation of his *Faust* in a letter to Wilhelm von Humboldt.[d] If we move from the lectures on poetics to the work that made Kehlmann's name, his novel *Measuring the World* (*Die Vermessung der Welt*), then the connection with Goethe and Wilhelm von Humboldt looks quite different. There they are both peripheral caricatures who appear ridiculous or repulsive beside the main characters – the other Humboldt, Alexander, and Carl Friedrich Gauß. The novel presents, as the pivotal figures of the time around 1800, not the poet and the scholar, but the natural scientist and the mathematician. Poet and scholar do not just *look* small beside them, they are *made* small. Goethe appears as an encomiast of awe-inspiring banality,[1] and the presentation of Wilhelm von Humboldt has so much polemical energy that he appears as a paragon of pomposity. The Gauß of the novel is relieved when he can get away from this Wilhelm von Humboldt, and the author's presentation is such that the reader feels the relief too.[2] *Measuring the World* is an act of iconoclasm directed at the poet and scholar, just as conversely the novel (despite much irony) presents the natural scientist and the mathematician as clearly the foremost minds of their time. That scientific and intellectual Germany should be embodied in Gauß and Alexander von Humboldt is a choice one can make coherently enough. However, it is worth noting that Kehlmann refers to a letter written by the poet he has caricatured to the scholar he has equally caricatured when he has to speak as a writer. It is worth noting the fact that Kehlmann's theses on poetics are closely connected with the German philosophy of art of the period around 1800, whose representatives the novel systematically marginalises or passes over in silence in its depiction of the age. For the origins of the principle that Kehlmann advances in his poetics lecture, the negation

d. 'Diese sehr ernsten Scherze.' Goethe to Wilhelm von Humboldt, 17 March 1832: Karl-Robert Mandelkow (ed.), *Goethes Briefe. Hamburger Ausgabe in 4 Bänden*, IV (Munich: Beck, 1976), 481.

of technical professionalism, and the re-orientation towards the general and the philosophical, lie in that classical German philosophy of art. Kehlmann comes closest to them, in thought and in word, when he emphasises 'the playful element of liberation through art' in the unmistakable diction of Schiller.[e]

The period around 1800 witnessed an upheaval in the history of discourse that still influences the way we talk about art and literature today. The time 'around 1800' has a nearly mystical quality to it thanks to the intensity and resonance of the theoretical projects of the time and to the contemporaneous literary productivity. In general histories of the epoch, it is held to mark the end of poetics bound by Aristotelian rules and the beginning of poetics oriented on the ideas of 'genius' and the 'autonomy of Art'. By a somewhat excessive metaphor, there is even talk of a revolution in aesthetics, as a counterpart to the French Revolution. Those involved, as is well known, saw it as such, and gave to Kant's *Critiques*, from which the philosophical impulse began, and also to the theories building upon them, a historical significance parallel to that of the political events in Paris.[3]

To approach this past era through a present-day writer, Kehlmann, demonstrates two things that are, in my view, typical of our relationship to it. It is a dual relationship both of distance and of proximity, and Kehlmann's novel and his lectures on poetics are, respectively, representative of each. The distance is shown in the iconoclastic way in which the novel, in its depiction of the age, uses the scientist and the mathematician to marginalise the poet and the scholar. Admittedly, the point of the novel lies in the fact that in their 'measurement of the world' the empirical and mathematical scientists reach the frontiers of the inexplicable and are wholly unable to cross them. Yet it is expressly not the opposition, the poets and scholars, who triumph. Quite the contrary. Even within their limitations, the naturalist Alexander von Humboldt and the mathematician Gauß remain the only thinkers of the time who can be taken seriously; Goethe and the other Humboldt cannot rise to more than edifying fatuities. When the Alexander of the novel mentions that 'his brother has recently carried out a profound study of Schiller',[f] the adjective 'profound' is made an object of mockery in the perspective of the main characters, as in the novel as a whole, and with it the entire idea that a study of Schiller could be at all relevant for sensible people out to obtain

e. 'Das spielerische Element der Befreiung durch Kunst.' Kehlmann, *Poetikvorlesungen*, 40.
f. 'Sein Bruder habe erst kürzlich eine tiefsinnige Studie über Schiller verfasst.' Kehlmann, *Die Vermessung der Welt*, 221.

scientific knowledge of the world. One may note that, in deploying such mockery, Kehlmann does not stand alone.

The proximity to the age evident in Kehlmann's lectures on poetics, on the other hand, is related almost exactly to the object of the novel's ridicule. For the study mentioned there is not only a part of the fictitious world of the novel: it really exists. Its title is *On Schiller and the Course of his Intellectual Development* (*Über Schiller und den Gang seiner Geistesentwicklung*).[4] In this study, Wilhelm von Humboldt paid homage primarily to Schiller's aesthetic theory, and therefore to the idea of aesthetic play endorsed by Kehlmann's lectures on poetics. Thus, in his lecture on poetics the modern author is in solidarity with that from which he distances himself in his work of fiction. As an author, Kehlmann mocks the very thing that simultaneously anchors his way of talking about literature. I think this is a significant conclusion. It can stand for a whole prevailing attitude to what we might call literary Idealism.

The expression, 'literary Idealism', can be understood in two ways, depending on whether the ideal is the content and object of literature, or is literature itself. The first case is a summons to the writer: represent ideals; the second is the representation of literature itself as the ideal. For example: in the first case, the task of literature is to represent perfection, or freedom or bliss; in the second case, literature is itself to be this perfection, or freedom or bliss, and not through the specific content selected and treated in the work, but in general, independently of all content, solely through the fact of being literature. We could differentiate the two cases by denominating them, respectively, normative and categorial Idealism: normative Idealism requiring literature to represent ideals; categorial Idealism making literature as such, that is, as a category into an ideal.

Literary Idealism of both these types can be found in German philosophy of Art around 1800. To distinguish them is not to assume some programmatic dichotomy, explicit at the time, according to which they are necessarily mutually exclusive. It is an analytical tool that we can employ to get a better understanding of the matter. It reveals two distinct ways of talking about literature as Art, one of which probably appears to us today to be largely defunct, while the other is still alive and active. Both can appear in a single text, yet remain analytically distinguishable. The best example of this is given by Schiller's letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (*Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*), in which literature is discussed, admittedly not specifically and in its own right, within the framework of a universal theory of Art. When Schiller demands of the artist that he should 'beget the ideal' and in complete independence of his own real world cast it 'silently

into endless time',[g] the normative variant is evident. It provides today's discarded cliché of the Idealist, which no one wishes to revive. However, when Schiller, appealing to his 'ideal of the play drive',[h] defines art categorially as the experience of freedom, he introduces into the theory of Art an expectation which has survived to the present day, and has become a widely shared ideal: namely, that Art intrinsically has something to do with freedom, that in some general way it carries a message of freedom. Even one of the most embittered opponents of the Idealist Schiller, Theodor W. Adorno, held fast to this ideal, and, entirely in Schiller's manner, declared the form of Art itself to be the representation of freedom. Aesthetic form, we read in Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* (*Ästhetische Theorie*), 'is the nonviolent synthesis of the scattered'; 'through form, [art] participates in civilization . . . it represents . . . freedom'.[i] This is the same Schillerian categorial Idealism that is recalled in Kehlmann's lectures on poetics as 'the playful element of liberation through art'. Schiller here is the founder of a whole discourse. His definition of art as 'freedom in appearance'[5] and his ideal of aesthetic play influence our basic expectations of Art, even where Schiller the Idealist is dismissed with contempt.

Schiller was, and to some extent still is, the stereotype of the normative Idealist. For that such verses as these are responsible, from his poem *Ideal and Life* (*Das Ideal und das Leben*):

> Werft die Angst des Irdischen von euch,
> Fliehet aus dem engen dumpfen Leben
> In des Ideales Reich![j]

The reception of this sort of thing varied: first, it was popular, then, it was a cliché, finally, it became a stumbling block, accused of escapism into the arts, regarded as a place of consolation by fine ideas. Literature studies in Germany have as a discipline extended this interpretation so that the intellectual failure has been given a national dimension: German bourgeois intellectuals, so the well-known accusation goes, redirected the radical impulse of the French Revolution into the philosophy of Art, and deluded themselves with revolutionary aesthetic ideas into ignoring their impotence and servility

g. 'Das Ideal zu erzeugen . . . schweigend in die unendliche Zeit.' Schiller, *Theoretische Schriften*, 585.
h. 'Ideal des Spieltriebs', *Ibid.*, 613.
i. 'Ist die gewaltlose Synthesis des Zerstreuten . . . durch Form hat [die Kunst] teil an der Zivilisation . . . repräsentiert sie . . . Freiheit.' Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, eds. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1973), 216.
j. 'Throw the fears of earthly existence far from you / Flee from restrictive, monotonous life / Into the kingdom of the ideal.' Friedrich Schiller, *Gedichte*, ed. Georg Kurscheidt (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker, 1992), 152–6, at 152.

in sociopolitical reality. This damning judgement applies not just to Schiller and his programme of 'aesthetic education', but also to the 'universal poetry' of the early Romantic Jena school, to the project of a 'new mythology' in the *Earliest Systematic Programme of German Idealism*, and to the Romantic period as a whole, seen as a retreat into fairy tale, fantasy, ensouled Nature or the Christian Middle Ages. Seen in this way, Idealism loses all credibility as an option for the artist. This negative evaluation has become an almost uneliminable burden upon the concept of 'Idealism', and persists today. Even if it is not regarded as ideologically suspect, it connotes at least an aestheticist lack of realism. In literary and artistic contexts, in the discourse of literary criticism and literary theory, the concept of 'Idealism' went out of circulation a long time ago. Rüdiger Safranski made an attempt to revive it in the Schiller bicentenary year of 2005,[6] but only proved the rule once and for all. For his argument amounts to no more than the pious notion that by his thinking and writing Schiller resisted the forces of decay in his sick body – a banality incapable of recovering 'Idealism' as a usable concept.

Schiller's categorial Idealism, by contrast, is still productive, as its resonance in Adorno and Kehlmann shows, even where the name of Schiller and the term 'Idealism' have fallen into disuse or discredit. What is defunct as a normative obligation for art and literature has survived in the discussion of their categorial status. Art and literature themselves become ideals: that is, the enduring innovation in the history of the discourse brought about by the philosophy of Art from the time around 1800. It remains current today.

To see more clearly what I mean by the expression 'categorial Idealism', it is helpful to take another look at Schiller's *Ästhetische Erziehung* where he explains his own method. He calls it, with reference to Kant, a 'transcendental way'.[k] Yet the path that Schiller takes is very different from Kant's questioning of the conditions of the possibility of experience. Schiller takes his 'transcendental way' after he has described how in European history the flourishing of art has often accompanied a political lack of freedom, indeed, the worst despotism. He chooses this way so as to search for a better concept of art than that which experience has taught. It is thus not a matter of the preconditions of experience, but rather a matter of the exertion of thought over and *against* experience. The construction of the aesthetic play in which Schiller wishes to find his better concept of art makes it explicit: 'To be sure we must not here think of games as they are played in real life'.[l] Schiller's

k. 'Transzendentalen Weg', Schiller, *Theoretische Schriften*, 592.

l. 'Freilich dürfen wir uns hier nicht an die Spiele erinnern, die in dem wirklichen Leben im Gange sind', *Ibid.*, 613.

method is thus not transcendental in the Kantian sense, but rather in the more common sense. This fits the poetic picture he paints of his method: 'if one does not venture beyond reality, one will never conquer truth'.[m] Schiller, as we can see here, is more precise in his metaphors than in his concepts. For his ideal of art goes significantly beyond reality with the hopeful expectation that the experience of art might become politically effective as an education into freedom. That is, his artist's answer to the failure of the French Revolution, all in all, is less a definition of art than an engaged reflection on the possibilities of its having a practical effect, which, as Schiller conceives it, integrates anthropological, ethical and political perspectives. Yet the whole is understood as a determination of the nature of art. This is stated in Schiller's third explanation of his method, which consists of the ontological opposition of essence and accident: 'thus we must seek to discover the absolute and permanent from the individual and changing appearances, and by discarding all contingent limitations gain a hold on the necessary conditions'.[n] These multidimensional, ethically engaged reflections are therefore claiming to be a definition of the nature of beauty and of Art, which, however, is ceasing to be a clearly recognisable and definable thing and becoming an infinite idea; infinite in the double sense of that which has unclear contours and of that which invites us to infinite reflections. Schiller's definition of beauty as 'freedom in appearance' has precisely this quality. Its infinite character makes it not weak, but strong. There is a fruitful lack of clarity in the definition *of* the thing that makes it possible to formulate very much clearer questions *about* the thing, its relevance and its effects. How to recognise Art as Art from the definition 'freedom in appearance', how to differentiate it from non-Art, is completely unclear. What relevance and effect is being ascribed to it, however, is perfectly apparent.

In Schiller's definition of beauty and fine art, applied to the specific case of literature, I see the archetypal case of what I want to call 'categorial literary Idealism'. It is the metamorphosis of the concept of literature into an infinite ideal. It is the process of examining and answering the question 'what is literature?' not by mapping a domain of objects, but rather by opening literature up to questions of its relevance and effect. And – seen from the other side – it is at the same time the process of formulating demands on literature for relevance and effect such that they are not demands *on* literature,

m. 'Wer sich über die Wirklichkeit nicht hinauswagt, der wird nie die Wahrheit erobern', *Ibid.*, 592.
n. 'So müssen wir aus [den] individuellen und wandelbaren Erscheinungsarten das Absolute und Bleibende zu entdecken, und durch Wegwerfung aller zufälligen Schranken uns der notwendigen Bedingungen . . . zu bemächtigen suchen', *Ibid.*

but rather appear as demands *of* literature itself, as features that are present in literature as such and in which it consists.

The innovations in the way of talking about literature brought about by the philosophy of Art in the period around 1800 are to be understood as the establishment of categorial literary Idealism. It was not a concern only of the Jena Early Romantics, as a part of German Idealist philosophy. In literary Idealism, Jena Romanticism and Weimar Classicism are at one. As a programme it can be associated with Romanticism, and in particular with the verb 'to romanticise'. If Weimar Classicism is understood as neo-Classicism, literary Idealism is part of that movement because of its connection with antiquity, to which it gives a new character of its own. This will now be argued in two sections under the titles 'Romanticising Lessing' and 'Idealism instead of Aristotelianism', which further document and explain the procedures of categorial literary Idealism. First, however, the moment of innovation must be more closely examined, for literary Idealism was not an opponent of literary Enlightenment, but its consequence.

## 1. Categorial literary Idealism as a consequence of the Enlightenment

Aesthetics as a philosophy of Art is a product of the century of Enlightenment. It provided a new systematic foundation to the theory of Art by deriving Art categorially from the quality of beauty. This leads to a basic change in the understanding of Art. Art is now understood in terms of the perception, and the qualities, of the finished work – no longer in terms of the rules for its production, as in the earlier tradition of treatises for poets and artists, whose training was closely linked to rhetoric. At the same time, this meant a change in the concept of 'art', which was no longer understood as a skill, an ability to produce according to rules in the sense of the Latin 'ars', but rather as a finished product. The most important initial impulse was given to this discussion in the middle of the eighteenth century by Charles Batteux, with his treatise *Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe*, which established this principle in the traditional Aristotelian terms of mimesis, but at the same time opened up a new perspective by defining art from the point of view of the recipient, as the experience of sensuous perfection. The term for this new perspective was coined by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten with the title of his *Aesthetica*. Kant's *Critique of Judgment* became the classic of this discipline through its definition of the perception of the beautiful as 'uninterested pleasure' and of fine art as 'art of the genius', who does not work according

to given rules, but, rather, on the basis of his or her individuality, giving rules to art. Kant summarised the ideas about genius of the contemporary *Storm and Stress* movement, whose claims led to the end of the influence of Aristotelian poetics in poetry and gave rise to the claim and expectation that the quality of poetry does not derive from universal rules, but rather from the imagination of inspired individuals. The beginning of Kehlmann's poetics lecture ('There is no professionalism in writing . . . Don't believe what any professor of poetry says') shows that the effect of this innovation has endured to today, and to that extent the modern author is much nearer to the 200-year-old Kant than Kant himself to the only barely older Johann Christoph Gottsched, the last representative of Aristotelian poetics in Germany.

The Enlightenment attempt to find a systematic definition of art also raises the categorial question of literature as art. The poetics of the rule books spent little time on this question. In Gottsched's *Critical Poetics Essayed* (*Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst*) it is quickly and simply answered. Poetry, he says briefly, is 'one of the most important liberal arts',[o] differentiated from others in that it imitates nature in 'description', 'storytelling' or 'representation',[p] and not, as in painting or sculpture, by carrying out this imitation in colour, stone or wood. This definition is in two senses Aristotelian: in its use of the concept of imitation, and in its method of definition by *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica*. With regard to the categorial understanding of poetry, Gottsched remains entirely on this Aristotelian foundation. His further interest is not in what is specific to the art of poetry in general, but in the various genres and the rules appropriate to them. Rule-poetry is genre poetry. Its understanding of the matter is determined extensionally through the canon of received poetic forms and not intensionally by an analysis of the characteristics of poetry as a whole. Gottsched's negligence in intensional definitions can be seen in the triad with which he marks out what is specific to poetry: 'description', 'storytelling' and 'representation'. This is a heterogeneous series, insofar as only the first two describe a linguistic process. They can certainly be regarded as specifically poetic means of imitation. But representation? Apart from the fact that it is not exclusively linguistic, but can also be pictorial or figural, it is, as potentially free and independent productivity, in direct contrast to the concept of imitation. Gottsched does not entertain such considerations. The general question of poetry is not one that holds his attention for long.

o. 'Eine von den wichtigsten freyen Künsten', Johann Christoph Gottsched, *Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst*, vierte sehr vermehrte Auflage, Leipzig 1751 (reprinted Darmstadt, 1962), 67.

p. 'Beschreibung . . . Erzählung . . . Vorstellung', *Ibid.*, 92.

For him, it is much more a matter of the norms for the many concrete genres and, when he does speak of poetry in general, he is not concerned with its concept, but rather with concrete regulations, such as the requirement of probability, the moral and intellectual demands on the poet, and stylistic and metrical rules.

The new and opposing claims of philosophical aesthetics are at first indirect, in that they are formulated only as a desideratum. This first step away from rule-poetry to literary Idealism is taken by Johann Georg Sulzer's *General Theory of the Fine Arts* (*Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste*). Its entries under 'poetry' and 'poetic' indicate the lack of an adequate conceptual definition of poetry. The existing theories of poetry – Sulzer names Aristotle, Horace, Pope, Bodmer and Breitinger – are said indeed to offer 'many observations' and useful details in the matter, but no 'proper determination of the unique character of poetry'.[q] Sulzer also gives the reason that: the authors have, up to this point, lacked a general theory of fine art, an 'Aesthetic',[r] on the basis of which an adequate conceptual determination of poetry is alone possible. Although Sulzer lays claim to such a general theory of art in his title, he fails to deliver it, but rather collects various observations from the traditional treatises on art and poetry. Despite this, he marks the transition to a new way of talking about literature as art by formulating his sense of a lack and his desire for a more thorough conceptual definition.

In the end, the difference between these two ways of talking was defined by Wilhelm von Humboldt. He contrasts them as 'technical' and 'aesthetic judgement'. The former, he says, relates to 'external regularity', the latter to the 'inner character'; the former consists of 'specific and empirical rules', the latter rises up to 'philosophical heights'.[s] This is succinctly summarised, but remains in the realm of the obvious. With two further criteria of differentiation, Humboldt goes beyond this and recognises two less obvious, yet equally relevant, differences: the 'technical' way of talking is aimed at the artist, the 'aesthetic', on the other hand, at 'man'[t] in general; the 'technical' treats the individual work as a specimen of a classified genre, the 'aesthetic', on the other hand, sees the individual work as an individual, and is basically

q. 'Vielerley Beobachtungen . . . richtige Bestimmung des eigenthümlichen Charakters der Poesie', Johann Georg Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste*, Erster Theil (Leipzig: Weidemanns Erben & Reich, 1773), 344f.

r. 'Aesthetik', *Ibid.*, 344.

s. 'Technische . . . ästhetische Beurtheilung . . . äussre Regelmäßigkeit . . . innren Charakter . . . speciellen und empirischen Regeln . . . philosophische Höhe.' Humboldt, *Schriften zur Altertumskunde und Ästhetik*, 248, 130.

t. 'Den Menschen', *Ibid.*, 130.

ready, as Humboldt says, to create 'a new genre . . . for the sake of a single poem'.[u] Humboldt thereby identifies two significant characteristics of the new manner of speaking about literature derived from the philosophy of Art: the inflation of literary theory with universal questions of humanity (in Humboldt's words: the address to 'man'); and the primacy of individual practice and the individual work over all theoretical rules. For this also means the re-orientation of literature theory from production-determinacy to reception-determinacy. The theoretician functions principally in the role of the reader, not in that of the potential author. It is the criticism of August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel that pushes through this change of role within the discourse of literary theory, and thus makes the discussion of specific works into the actual medium of theory. Humboldt, too, is operating on this principle. All of the phrases just quoted here are drawn from his essay *On Goethe's* Hermann and Dorothea (*Über Goethes* Hermann und Dorothea). No. 120 of Friedrich Schlegel's *Lyceum-Fragments* runs: 'Anyone who gave a proper account of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* would probably really have said what contemporary literature now is.'[v] With this a modern understanding of literature begins, which is still accepted today, and which attributes all dignity to the individual work and to its innovative potential. General prescriptions fade into the background. The theory of literature detaches itself from the canon of rules and binds itself instead to the sensitivity for and reflection on exemplary literary phenomena. This primacy of practice makes literature into an infinite project, which is perpetually redefining itself through reflection on a writing practice that is always open to development.

Friedrich Schlegel's definition of Romantic poetry in the 116th *Athenäum* fragment has achieved classic status: 'Romantic poetry', it says, 'is a progressive universal poetry . . . that is its actual nature, that it is eternally only in process, can never be completed. It cannot be exhausted by a theory, and only a divinatory criticism might dare to attempt to characterise its Ideal.'[w] That is not entirely the language of today, but it is today's thoughts – literature thought of as something dynamic, open to development, that cannot

u. 'Zum Behuf eines einzelnen Gedichts . . . eine neue Gattung', *Ibid.*, 132.

v. 'Wer Goethes *Meister* gehörig charakterisierte, der hätte damit wohl eigentlich gesagt, was es jetzt an der Zeit ist in der Poesie.' Friedrich Schlegel, *Charakteristiken und Kritiken I (1796–1801)*, ed. Hans Eichner, Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, vol. 2 (Munich: Schöningh, 1967), 162.

w. 'Die romantische Poesie ist eine progressive Universalpoesie . . . ja das ist ihr eigentliches Wesen, daß sie ewig nur werden, nie vollendet sein kann. Sie kann durch keine Theorie erschöpft werden, und nur eine divinatorische Kritik dürfte es wagen, ihr Ideal charakterisieren zu wollen.' *Ibid.*, 182f.

be taught in advance by theorists, but rather is always being demonstrated anew by successful examples. That 'only a divinatory criticism might dare to attempt to characterise its Ideal' we would also not say in those words today, but we would more or less mean the same, when we expect to get a proper understanding of literature not from abstract theories, but from the critical engagement with concrete works. Schlegel's formulation points in its own way to what I call categorial literary Idealism – the grounding of the concept of literature upon the potentially infinite reflection on literary practice and the expectations we have of it. In the 1790s, when the rules of normative genre poetry were not long gone, Schlegel's formulations were revolutionarily new. They are not obsolete even today, they have merely become a habit; Kehlmann, for example. This is exactly how he, too, proceeds in his poetics lectures, orienting himself on a story by Nabokov and on his own successful novel in his explanation of literature. 'I don't believe in rules when writing',[x] he says, and follows this maxim insofar as he also gives no rules by which he writes his novel, but rather begins with his novel as simply given. The professor of poetry appears in the role of reader and critic. Even the producer of literature uses an aesthetic not of production, but of reception to elucidate the characteristics of literature.

Categorial literary Idealism is thus a consequence of the Enlightenment insofar as it follows in the footsteps of philosophical aesthetics. Like the philosophy of the Enlightenment, it seeks an understanding of the category of Art not from rules for its production, but from reflection on its perception.

## II. The romanticising of Lessing

The transition from the conceptual canon of rules to aesthetic reflection could be imagined as an empirical turn in the theory of literature. That would be the moment when this reflection took the form of a conceptualisation and systematisation of the characteristics of all the existing works that are generally considered to be literature. The turn from a production- to a reception-aesthetic, the turn from guides for the poet to the reflective activity of the reader, could then appear as the beginning of empirical research into literature: instead of giving regulations for how writing should be done, we observe how it is actually done. What begins with the philosophy of Art around 1800, in particular with the brothers Schlegel and their reader-oriented approach to theory, is not, however, an empiricisation. For

x. 'Ich glaube nicht an Regeln beim Schreiben', Kehlmann, *Poetikvorlesungen*, 33.

the aesthetic reflection, which is here supposed to provide the concept of poetry, is not a conceptualisation and systematisation of existing poetical practice. It has no descriptive relationship to that which it observes. Rather, it develops its own ideas. This shows itself in two ways: first, in that it does not follow general literary practice, but rather makes a very deliberate and restricted selection from it; secondly, in that it does not attempt merely to describe this selection, but rather takes it as an occasion for further speculation that leads far away from the original perception of the concrete works. The primacy of practice is thus valid not generally, but only for a selection conforming to a set of approved personal convictions. And starting aesthetics from reception does not mean a restriction to what is perceived and to reflection on it, but leads rather to highly speculative idiosyncrasy. Thus, it is Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and not another novel that Friedrich Schlegel chooses for the categorial understanding of literature. And his review of this novel initiates the reviewing style of the new epoch,[7] which involves not so much describing a concrete work and judging it, as developing some universal theory with the specifically selected work as a starting point. With the expression 'divinatory criticism', Friedrich Schlegel hits the nail on the head. Criticism becomes a sort of prophetic art, with poetry as a whole as its subject, and taking the individual work only as an opportunity to formulate its own ideals.

The best example of the 'manner of speaking' characteristic of this literary theory is provided by Schlegel's critique of Lessing. At the same time it makes the change of epoch visible, because around 1800 Lessing was still the acknowledged authority for those contemporaries to whom the early Romantics appeared as philosophically confused braggarts. Schlegel's interpretation of Lessing has a strongly polemical relation to the picture of Lessing, which emerged from the poetics of the Enlightenment. In that sense, one can speak of his romanticising of Lessing. This happens in two documents: in Schlegel's study *On Lessing* (*Über Lessing*), which appeared in two parts, in 1797 and 1801; and in the three-volume selection of 1804, *Lessing's Thoughts and Opinions* (*Lessings Gedanken und Meinungen*), edited by Schlegel and interspersed with his own introductory essays.

The study begins with mockery of the praises currently heaped on Lessing: 'Few writers are as gladly named and praised as he; indeed it is an almost universal pastime now and then to say something important about Lessing.'[y]

y. 'Wenige Schriftsteller nennt und lobt man so gern, als ihn: ja es ist eine fast allgemeine Liebhaberei, gelegentlich etwas Bedeutendes über Lessing zu sagen.' Schlegel, *Charakteristiken und Kritiken I*, 100.

Schlegel's praise of Lessing differs from that of his contemporaries in that it passes over the greater part of Lessing's work almost with contempt – in particular, his bourgeois dramas and his dramaturgical and theoretical work – in order instead to praise to the heavens a single work, *Nathan the Wise*, as a poetic revelation. Quite expressly, he plays off unpredictable individuality against the idea of genre. *Nathan* is celebrated as 'the most individual, idiosyncratic, and peculiar of all Lessing's productions'[z]; *Emilia Galotti*, by contrast, is dismissed as a 'specimen of dramatic algebra'.[aa] Schlegel's praise for Lessing is a polemic against the rational poetics of the Enlightenment – he calls it 'incorrect to regard [Lessing] as a judge in artistic matters'[bb] – and invokes instead poetic irrationalism: 'A certain sacred something lives and moves in *Nathan*, compared with which all syllogistical figures, like all rules of the dramatic art, are truly paltry rubbish.'[cc] That which appears here in the religious language of the numinous is described by Schlegel elsewhere in Kantian diction as a step from Understanding to Reason: *Emilia* is a matter of the understanding,[8] *Nathan*, on the contrary, is a matter of reason, although Schlegel adds a religious note to Kant's vocabulary: *Nathan*, he says, is conceived out of '*the enthusiasm of pure reason*'.[dd] This is a typically Schlegelian formulation, because it connects the current academic and philosophical discourse with the ancient topos of inspiration. The rationality of Enlightenment drama is thus suppressed and negated, a rationality to which Lessing himself held fast and which from his point of view also suffices to explain his *Nathan*. Schlegel continues his offensive, directing his praise of *Nathan* against the remainder of Lessing's work, which without *Nathan* is for him bound to 'appear only as a false tendency', false insofar as it is 'the applied, effect-centred poetry of rhetorical stage dramas'.[ee] These final words of Schlegel's are a polemical paraphrase of Lessing's own dramatic theory, oriented on rhetoric and effect. *Nathan the Wise* fully corresponds to this concept. Lessing himself would never have played off this piece, as Schlegel does, as 'pure poetry'[ff] against the 'applied' poetry of 'rhetorical stage dramas'. Such an opposition is wholly foreign to him. Schlegel's attempt to

z. 'Das eigenste, eigensinnigste und sonderbarste unter allen Lessingschen Produkten', *Ibid.*, 118.
aa. 'Exempel der dramatischen Algebra', *Ibid.*, 116.
bb. 'Irrig . . . für einen Kunstrichter zu halten', *Ibid.*, 398.
cc. 'Es lebt und schwebt doch ein gewisses heiliges Etwas im *Nathan*, wogegen alle syllogistischen Figuren, wie alle Reguln der dramatischen Dichtkunst, eine wahre Lumperei sind.' *Ibid.*, 123.
dd. 'Vom *Enthusiasmus der reinen Vernunft*', *Ibid.*, 119.
ee. 'Doch nur eine falsche Tendenz scheinen müßte . . . angewandte Effektpoesie der rhetorischen Bühnendramas', *Ibid.*, 125.
ff. 'Reine Poesie', *Ibid.*

explicate his concept of poetry with *Nathan der Weise* is less an exegesis of Lessing than an independent invention. The sovereign ease with which Lessing was able in this play to continue his theological battle with Götze despite the ban on his publishing is the decisive characteristic which recommends *Nathan* to Schlegel. He sees in it polemical 'elegance' and 'irony',[gg] as well as a 'piquant combination of quiet, heartfelt, deep enthusiasm with naïve coldness',[hh] which together make up his own ideal of writing. By means of this ideal, he levers *Nathan* out of the dramaturgy of the Enlightenment and puts it on the path to his own poetological goal. At the end of his study, Schlegel finds an image for that goal in the 'transcendent line', envisaged as an ellipse, 'one of whose foci lies in infinity'.[ii] With this vision of the invisible, which reminds one of the paradoxical metaphors of negative theology, Schlegel summarises the development of Lessing's work and finds a final image for his own reinterpretative transformation of Enlightenment dramaturgy into the openness of ironic poetry.

The second document, the selected edition of *Lessings Thoughts and Opinions*, links with this final picture in its introductory dedication to Fichte. Lessing's work is described here as 'fragment of an infinite orbit',[jj] which leads from the false notions of rule-based poetics to the proper concept of poetry. Again it is Lessing himself, in particular Lessing the theoretician of art, from whom Schlegel's Idea of poetry pushes off. Against the subtitle of Lessing's *Laocöon* ('On the Limits of Painting and of Poetry', 'Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie'), Schlegel asserts that it is completely inadmissible to speak of 'limits on poetry', because poetry is 'absolutely universal'.[kk] Unlike the preceding study, the positive link to Lessing is this time not restricted to the single work *Nathan*, but is made with the numerous polemical writings of Lessing, whom Schlegel sees here as an intellectual warrior against the 'shallow epoch of literature',[ll] in which unfortunately he was born. The Enlightenment polemicist Lessing is thus characterised as an opponent of Enlightenment (of the 'Enlightenment crew',[mm] as Schlegel puts it), and the aggressive, negative side of Lessing's polemics is deployed against Lessing's own theories of art. Schlegel steps up to continue this polemic against his

gg. 'Eleganz . . . Ironie', *Ibid.*, 119.
hh. 'Pikantes Gemisch von ruhiger inniger tiefer Begeisterung und naiver Kälte', *Ibid.*, 121.
ii. 'Transzendenten Linie . . . deren eines Zentrum in der Unendlichkeit liegt', *Ibid.*, 415.
jj. 'Bruchstück . . . aus einer unendlichen Laufbahn.' F. Schlegel, *Charakteristiken und Kritiken II (1802–1829)*, ed. Hans Eichner, Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, vol. 3 (Munich: Schöningh, 1975), 50.
kk. 'Von Grenzen der Poesie . . . schlechthin universell', *Ibid.*, 77.
ll. 'Seichte Epoche der Literatur', *Ibid.*, 46. mm. 'Aufklärerwesen', *Ibid.*, 67.

own age, which he thinks is devoid of any understanding of literature and poetry. Only with Kant was a first indication given that both have something to do with the ideas of infinity and freedom.[9]

A contemporary review of Schlegel's edition of Lessing helps to capture the peculiar quality of Schlegel's way of talking about literary theory. It appeared in the journal *Der Freimüthige*, edited by Kotzebue, and that alone is enough to put it in the anti-Schlegel camp. In its critique, it makes Schlegel's decisive characteristic negatively apparent. The reviewer rejects Schlegel's judgement that 'the Germans have no literature' because they lack any proper understanding of the matter. He does not find this judgement insulting or arrogant, but rather simply ridiculous and incomprehensible. For literature, as the reviewer defines it, is 'the sum total of all authors' efforts in the sciences and arts'. These obviously exist, and it is ridiculous to deny it.[nn] What the reviewer objects to is precisely what I call categorial literary Idealism. For the reviewer, the concept of literature is determined by the Aristotelian rule of definition: *genus proximum* (two are present here, science and art), and *differentia specifica* (here, writing in contrast to other scientific forms of presentation such as numbers, drawings, formulae or other artistic media). This definition matches that common in the eighteenth century, which understood by literature not only the more restricted area of poetry, but also the linguistically based disciplines, such as historiography, classical studies, philology, philosophy, art criticism and all the rhetorical genres. Schlegel's concept of literature and poetry does not differ from this in being limited to the artistic area of poetry. After all, he makes reference to the wide spectrum of genres covered by Lessing the polemicist (including letters, essays, reviews and other non-poetical forms) in order to expound his concept of literature and poetry. But what defines these categories 'literature' and 'poetry' he no longer states by means of higher-order concepts and specific differences of medium, but rather through ideal expectations, such as that they should awaken 'the feeling of infinitude' and 'the memory of freedom',[oo] that they eliminate the boundary between reason and fantasy,[10] and that 'universality' is their 'fundamental characteristic'.[pp] The interest attaching to such a definition is very different from that which wishes to mark off literature and poetry as specific areas of a culture. It is

nn. 'Die Deutschen hätten keine Literatur . . . die Masse [der] schriftstellerischen Bestrebungen in den Wissenschaften und Künsten.' *Der Freimüthige oder Ernst und Scherz*, No. 113 (Berlin: Frölich, 7 June 1804), 449.

oo. 'Das Gefühl von Unendlichkeit . . . die Erinnerung der Freiheit', Schlegel, *Charakteristiken und Kritiken II*, 56.

pp. 'Universalität . . . Grundeigenschaft', *Ibid.*, 83.

not a matter of making one thing recognisable and distinguishable from others. Rather, it is a matter of formulating ethically engaged expectations of it. Treating these nevertheless as the defining characteristics of the thing itself simply dresses up wishes as knowledge. Wanting better is presented as knowing better. That is the discourse strategy of categorial literary Idealism.

## III. Idealism instead of Aristotelianism

What can be observed in the case of the Aristotelian rules of definition is symptomatic of the change in the relation to classical antiquity brought about by the Idealist philosophy of art. The ancient world no longer functions as a canon of artistic rules, but instead represents a particular idea of art, entirely detached from the imposition of any rules. With this, the Aristotelianism comes to an end that had shaped the European theory of poetry since the rediscovery of Aristotelian poetics in the Italian Renaissance. Gottsched is its final representative in Germany, both at the general level with his use of the genre of the treatise on poetry, and specifically with his use of the controlling concept of mimesis as well as of multiple other normative appeals not only to Aristotle, but also to other classical models. With the end of rule-poetics, the exemplary function of the ancient world is not over. It merely changes in quality, and in such a way that it too becomes evidence for categorial Idealism. In categorial Idealism, the exemplary function of ancient art is no longer manifest in the fulfilment by its individual works of specific norms – so that, for example, in the Aristotelian perspective Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* represents the ideal of an analytic tragedy. The new exemplary function consists in ancient art as a whole being thought of as an ideal of art. In Schiller's *Aesthetic Education* the art of ancient Greece stands for the ideal beauty in which the oppositions of his dualistic anthropology are reconciled in harmony. In Hegel's *Aesthetics* it stands for the supreme perfection of art that in its time it should have been the 'highest expression of the Absolute'.[qq] This is something quite different from neo-classical normativity for which the ancient works serve as models of what is perfectly correct. The perfections that are at issue here have nothing more to do with a concrete aesthetic of the individual work, and in the form of philosophical ideals go so far beyond the actual experience of art that they project themselves into an

qq. 'Höchste Ausdruck für das Absolute gewesen', HW, XIV, 26.

artistic Golden Age. Antiquity serves as a plane on to which ideals are projected and altogether that is its function in the theory of art around 1800. It gives the theory a utopian element that permits the articulation of claims on art that go beyond any reality that could be experienced. Even if Hegel holds this claim to be definitively obsolete, it is still the core of his concept of art. For as 'highest expression of the Absolute', antiquity is for him still 'classical' art, which he understands not historically, but systematically as 'what true art is according to its concept'.[rr] This is categorial Idealism. He constructs for himself a concept of the thing, which can free itself entirely from the thing's observable presence.

In literature theory it is the concept of myth in which the utopian element in antiquity becomes active. In Aristotelian poetics, 'mythos' means the action, the plot, and in the centuries of rule-based poetics it serves as a source of material, motifs and figures, which is passed on as a tradition and used by convention, without – as Benjamin Hederich's lexicon of mythology, still used by Goethe, puts it so nicely – 'seeing it as truths, or in other wise making more of it than is proper'.[ss] The Idealist philosophy of art makes significantly more of myth and uses it to propose a maximal concept of what literary texts can achieve: namely, that they are all-encompassing representations of the world with a collective appeal that reconciles all social and intellectual differences. The notion that Greek mythology offered such an all-encompassing, collectively binding understanding of world and self inspires the hope that contemporary literature might do the same. This is the Romantic idea of 'new mythology', which appears in the so-called *Earliest Systematic Programme of German Idealism*, then in Friedrich Schlegel's *Address on Mythology* (*Rede über die Mythologie*), and then at its most developed in Schelling's *Philosophy of Art*. With this an old commonplace is revived, which was also a part of the Aristotelian tradition, namely, that 'the oldest poets . . . [were] seen as teachers of the human race, as extraordinary, indeed, quite divine men'.[tt] These are Gottsched's words, yet for him it is merely a conventional topos of praise for poetry which plays no part in his own understanding of the matter. The tone in the *Earliest Systematic Programme* is quite different. Here, the old commonplace is freighted with new conviction and appears as a triumphal recovery of the original truth: 'Poetry is

rr. 'Was die wahrhafte Kunst ihrem Begriff nach ist', *Ibid.*, 13.

ss. 'Für Wahrheiten ansehen, oder auch sonst mehr Wesen von [ihm] machen, als sich geziemet.' Benjamin Hederich, *Gründliches mythologisches Lexikon* (Leipzig, 1770; reprinted Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996), xi.

tt. 'Die ältesten Poeten . . . für Lehrer des menschlichen Geschlechts, für außerordentliche, ja recht göttliche Männer angesehen', Gottsched, *Critische Dichtkunst*, 90.

given through this a higher value, it becomes at the end, what it was at the beginning – the school teacher of humanity.'[uu]

The utopianism that introduced the idealisation of the ancient world into the discussion of art is still with us. Aristotelianism, on the other hand, has disappeared, together with rule-poetics. As a canon of rules and examples for how to write perfect epics, tragedies or strophic odes, ancient Greek literature plays no role after 1800. However, as an idea, the idea that poetry could be a collectively authoritative, universal representation and interpretation of the world, it has retained its power. The Homeric epics are still a living force through the Romantics' idea of them. That idea has become a part of the general understanding of 'myth'. This term has a different meaning today from that which it had in Aristotelian poetics or even in Enlightenment philosophy, where, though it was honoured as the religion and philosophy of the ancients, there was at the same time a certain distance from it as the religion and philosophy of the childhood stage of human history. The current understanding of myth, however, has the characteristic of renewability, first given it by the romantic interpretation of Greek mythology. To that extent, in modern talk about myth – regardless of whether in affirmation or in critique of ideology – there is a legacy of Idealist Romanticism. For it is thanks to this Romanticism that the perspective on myth has turned from the past to the present and the future, that myth is understood no longer as a peculiarity of very old texts, but as a potentiality of current and future texts. The author of the *Earliest Systematic Programme* is aware of this innovation, when he calls the 'New Mythology' an Idea, which 'as far as I know, has never occurred to anyone else.'[vv] One could add that since then it has not disappeared from our awareness, not in the sense that the demand for a 'New Mythology' has become universal; but in the sense that it is regarded as possible that new mythologies can come into being, that the mythic is not a purely antiquated, but potentially a current phenomenon. The expression 'myth' still bears today the romantic idea of its renewability. Materially speaking, that idea has passed over from the Homeric epics into the great novels, beyond literature into film and in particular into the massive productions of Hollywood. Myth – so profoundly has the romantic concept of a 'New Mythology' changed the use of the term forever – is no antiquated

uu. 'Die Poësie bekömmt dadurch [ein]e höhere Würde, sie wird am Ende wieder, was sie am Anfang war – Lehrerin der Menschheit.' *Mythologie der Vernunft. Hegels ‚ältestes Systemprogramm' des deutschen Idealismus*, eds. Christoph Jamme and Helmut Schneider (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1984), 13.

vv. 'Die so viel ich weiß, noch in keines Menschen Sinn gekommen ist.' *Ibid.*

corpus of stories and figures, but rather a grand idea of the power and range of literary narratives.

## IV. Conclusion: Idealism as our naïveté

'Le romantisme', said Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy with regard to the theory of literature, 'est notre *naïveté*'.[11] If one's naïveté is what one thinks of as unquestionably obvious, then this is a nice formulation for the present currency of Romantic, and particularly early Romantic, literary theory. The priority of literary practice over theory; the attachment of theory to the selective analysis and critique of specific works; the end of prescriptive genre-norms and instead the primacy of the large-scale, all-encompassing kaleidoscopic novel; the concept of literature itself as open to infinite development and defined more by ethically charged expectations of it than by its distinguishing characteristics; myth as a contemporary concept of the power and range of literature: these are all early Romantic re-orientations of literary theory that are still current today, unquestioned and 'naive'. What Friedrich Schlegel and his Jena circle developed under the name 'romantic poetry' is in many ways the foundation of the modern understanding of literature that is still accepted today. Only the term itself, 'romantic poetry', shows its age. This expression is understood and used in a much more limited manner than by the Jena early Romantics. That the expression 'poetry' limits itself to lyrics, and that 'romantic' refers to a sentimental affective quality, is a development of the nineteenth century. To avoid reading this back into the Jena Circle around 1800, it is better to understand their talk about 'romantic poetry' as talk about modern literature. If the expression 'romantic poetry' is simply replaced by the expression 'modern literature', many early Romantic sentences could be inserted unnoticed into current literary discourse. The 116th *Athenäum* fragment, too, would largely fit into the mainstream. Modern literature, it would then say, is a progressive universal literature. It 'unites all the separate genres' of literature and comes 'into contact with philosophy and rhetoric'. It can 'fill and saturate the forms of art with polished cultural material of every sort, and enliven it through the vibrancy of humour'. It can 'characterize [literary] individuals of every sort', and is at the same time fitting 'to express the spirit of the author fully'. It can 'become a mirror of the entire world around, a picture of the era', and develops its allure in the tension 'between the presenter and the presented'. 'It is capable of the highest and most all-round culture.' It is 'in process; indeed, that is its actual essence, that it can only eternally become, never be completed. It can

be exhausted through no theory.' It is 'free' and it is 'its first law', 'that the caprice of the poet tolerate no law above it'.[ww] What sounded revolutionary 200 years ago has today become a habit. Schlegel's talk of 'progressive universal poetry' is no past romantic dreaming, but rather marks the beginning of the modern understanding of literature. To that extent categorial literary Idealism is our naïveté.

Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, I must add, have a different emphasis from my own. They put a different aspect of early Romantic universal poetry in the foreground, which they reduce to their formula 'l'absolu littéraire'. That needs to be translated in two ways, given the exchangeability of nouns and adjectives in French: both the absolutely literary and the literary absolute. This is also how the authors understand their phrase. The meaning is: 'non seulement l'absolu de la littérature, mais la littérature en tant que l'absolu'.[12] This is the most radical exegesis of early Romantic universal poetry. It understands poetry not as an area of human knowledge and speech in relation to others, but rather it posits poetry as the encompassing whole absolutely, and in this way also gives an answer to the philosophical question of the Absolute. In this perspective, poetry absorbs all other forms of speech, in particular rhetoric understood as practical speech, as well as philosophy and science. Universal poetry means then: everything that is text, is poetry, and must be understood as poetry. This is an attempt at usurpation, an attempt to rule everything that is linguistic or linguistically expressed from the point of view of the aesthetic and artistic aspect of language. In the 1970s, when Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy published their book on German Early Romanticism, this perspective was connected with the recent *Grammatologie* of Jacques Derrida and the connected poststructuralist theories of text,[13] which for their part developed a universal concept of writing or text. This, too, had a sense of usurpation about it, insofar as it developed a critical meta-theory from Saussure's model, which declared the reality-reference of language to be an illusion, instead seeing language as an infinite game of signifiers

ww. 'Vereinigt alle getrennten Gattungen . . . mit der Philosophie und Rhetorik in Berührung . . . die Formen der Kunst mit gediegnem Bildungsstoff jeder Art anfüllen und sättigen, und durch die Schwingungen des Humors beseelen . . . Individuen jeder Art charakterisieren . . . den Geist des Autors vollständig auszudrücken . . . ein Spiegel der ganzen umgebenden Welt, ein Bild des Zeitalters werden . . . zwischen dem Dargestellten und dem Darstellenden . . . Sie ist der höchsten und der allseitigsten Bildung fähig . . . im Werden; ja das ist ihr eigentliches Wesen, daß sie ewig nur werden, nie vollendet sein kann. Sie kann durch keine Theorie erschöpft werden . . . frei . . . ihr erstes Gesetz . . . daß die Willkür des Dichters kein Gesetz über sich leide.' F. Schlegel, *Charakteristiken und Kritiken I*, 182f.

referring only to itself. It was the boom time of such meta-theoretical gestures of usurpation ('everything is text, everything is literature, everything is poetry'), which drew the interest of Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy to this aspect of Early Romanticism. With this, they unleashed a wave of interpretations of Early Romanticism in terms of poststructuralist text theories, a task for which Novalis' short text *Monolog* seemed fit, in which we read 'Precisely the unique aspect of language, that it cares only for itself, is what no one knows.'[xx] Supported by these and similar sentences, poststructuralism was seen in the 1980s as the contemporary form of Early Romanticism, and it was blithely ignored that Novalis' concept of self-referential language, quite differently from that of poststructuralism, rested upon a magical analogy between the world of things and speech.[14]

The contemporary relevance of Early Romanticism, in my opinion, does not lie in the most radical exegesis of 'universal poetry' as the precursor of the poststructuralist concept of texts. It is much more in the aspects summarised here as categorial literary Idealism. Through this, literary theory drops out of the classificatory language inherited from the Renaissance and makes the concept of literature into an infinite idea, an idea that develops outside all genre-specific text characteristics as a reflection on demands for relevance and effect. What is literature? When one searches one last time in Kehlmann's poetics lectures, the answer is: it is 'the primacy of apparently unstructured, bubbling storytelling', which turns against the 'enemies of tales' and thus against the 'actually inhumane' world which cares not a fig for art.[yy] With this the modern author, Kehlmann shows himself to be a categorial literary Idealist, just as one has been able to be for the last 200 years.

*Translated by Philip Stewart*

## Notes

1. Cf. Daniel Kehlmann, *Die Vermessung der Welt* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2005), 19.
2. Cf. *Ibid.*, 242.
3. To name only two of the best known: 'Die Revolution in der philosophischen Welt hat den Grund, auf dem die Ästhetik aufgeführt war, erschüttert, und das bisherige System derselben, wenn man ihm anders diesen Namen geben darf, über den Haufen

xx. 'Gerade das Eigenthümliche der Sprache, daß sie sich blos um sich selbst bekümmert, weiß keiner.' Novalis, *Schriften*, eds. Richard Samuel, Hans-Joachim Mähl and Gerhard Schulz (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1981), II, 672.

yy. 'Das Primat des scheinbar unstrukturierten, sprudelnden Erzählens . . . Erzählfeindlichkeit . . . eigentlich Inhumane.' Kehlmann, *Poetikvorlesungen*, 40.

geworfen.' Friedrich Schiller, *Theoretische Schriften*, eds. Rolf-Peter Janz, Hans Richard Brittnacher, Gerd Kleiner and Fabian Störmer (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker, 1992), 492. 'Die Französische Revolution, Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre, und Goethes Meister sind die größten Tendenzen des Zeitalters', Friedrich Schlegel, 216th *Athenäums-Fragment*, in F. S., *Charakteristiken und Kritiken I (1796–1801)*, ed. Hans Eichner (Munich: Schöningh, 1967), 198.

4. Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Werke in fünf Bänden, vol. 2: Schriften zur Altertumskunde und Ästhetik. Die Vasken*, eds. Andreas Flitner and Klaus Giel, 4th edn (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1986), 357–95.
5. Schiller, *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, 646; see also Schiller, 'Kallias, oder über die Schönheit', *Theoretische Schriften*, eds. Rolf-Peter Janz, Hans Richard Brittnacher, Gerd Kleiner and Fabian Störmer (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker, 1992), 276–329, here 285.
6. Rüdiger Safranski, *Schiller oder die Erfindung des Deutschen Idealismus* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2004).
7. Friedrich Schlegel, 'Über Goethes Meister', in Schlegel, *Charakteristiken und Kritiken I*, 126–46.
8. Cf. *Ibid.*, 116.
9. Cf. Schlegel, *Charakteristiken und Kritiken II (1802–1829)*, ed. Hans Eichner, Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, vol. 3 (Munich: Schöningh, 1975), 56.
10. *Ibid.*, 81.
11. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy (eds.) (in collaboration with Anne-Marie Lang), *L'Absolu littéraire. Théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemand* (Paris : Seuil, 1978), 27.
12. *Ibid.*, 21.
13. Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967).
14. Cf. my article 'Über Novalis' *Monolog* und kritische Erbauung', *Athenäum. Jahrbuch für Romantik* (1996), 197–206.

5

# Idealism in nineteenth-century German literature

IAN COOPER

Post-Kantian Idealism is not only the defining force in nineteenth-century German philosophy, but also the major intellectual current giving shape to nineteenth-century German literature. Its significance in both realms is owed to the long trajectory – encompassing both development and rejection – inspired by its most systematic representative: the speculative absolute Idealism of Hegel.[1] This was the point of departure for a lineage in German philosophy which sought variously to modify and fundamentally to challenge Hegel, by replacing his dialectical, or 'spiritual', terms with material processes and, in the later nineteenth century, by insisting on the primacy of will. Hegel's revolutionary development of Kant's own revolution (his 'post-Kantianism in a new vein'[2]), and the long-term philosophical reaction it engendered, are also the source of the most compelling historical connections to be drawn between many of Germany's most significant literary figures of the nineteenth century. One reason for this is that the themes of Hegel's thought in the broadest sense – that is, not simply (or even primarily) of that part of it which is concerned with literature – touch directly on those of literary writing, in seemingly disparate modes, from Friedrich Hölderlin to Thomas Mann. In the first major document of speculative Idealism, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 1807), Hegel's account of self-consciousness develops patterns familiar from his earlier, theological, association with Hölderlin, and combines these with an analysis of social being that has subterranean links with the conceptual foundations of European realism, and so, beyond any theory Hegel himself could give of the genre, to the novel. German poetry, prose fiction and drama of the nineteenth century repeatedly intersect with, and respond to, the intellectual tradition that Hegel initiated, and in which these two related aspects

of the speculative achievement – its religious inheritance and its realistic potential – enter into deep tensions.

For Hegel in the *Phenomenology*, as more obliquely for Hölderlin in his commentaries on Greek tragedy (1803), the emergence of a social world that can have an adequate conceptual grasp of itself turns out to be based in the confrontation with death. This is the core of one of Hegel's best known arguments, a 'secular parable' the construction of which is a characteristic achievement of Hegelian language.[3] In the dialectic of master (*Herr*) and slave (*Knecht*), the threat of death gives rise to a relation of power and dominance, and also to the realisation that the particularity of this relation is contingent and can therefore be surpassed. Hegel's account focuses on that primary danger of negation with which consciousness is confronted in its encounter with other consciousness, and on the awareness, which this makes possible for what Hegel calls the 'slave', that it chose to submit to the other – which means define itself in accordance with the other's perspective, be 'mastered' by the other – not because of any substantial difference between the two agents, but because of the fear of death which the slave experienced more profoundly than the master. With the realisation, by consciousness, that the claims of what has defined it originate in this moment and are thus not absolute, but have in fact always been dependent on the slave's own willingness to acknowledge them, the legitimacy of dominance is opened to question and the possibility emerges of a new social and ethical consciousness that is not based on the exercise of contingent (which is to say, arbitrary) power. The root of that transformation is the fear that was experienced when consciousness, faced with its negation, recognised death – the 'absolute' master – and Hegel describes this as an existential tremor in which everything was thrown into flux:

> For it [slave consciousness] has felt the fear of death, the absolute master. In this fear it has been dissolved internally, has utterly trembled within itself, and everything fixed has quaked in it. This pure universal movement, the entering into absolute flux of all that exists, is . . . absolute negativity.[a]

a. 'Denn es hat die Furcht des Todes, des absoluten Herrn, empfunden. Es ist darin innerlich aufgelöst worden, hat durchaus in sich selbst erzittert, und alles Fixe hat in ihm gebebt. Diese reine allgemeine Bewegung, das absolute Flüssigwerden alles Bestehens, ist . . . die absolute Negativität.' G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols. (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), III, 153 (henceforth in the text as HW). (All translations in this chapter are my own.)

In his poem 'As on a Holiday' ('Wie wenn am Feiertage', 1799 or 1800), Hölderlin described consciousness of spirit in terms of a shuddering *anamnesis* (ll. 45–6); Hegel here sees it as the experience, in subjectivity's quaking recognition of its finitude, of that absolute negativity, or 'pure movement', by which even death too – identified as the merely 'natural negation' (HW, III, 149) afflicting material particularity – is negated. Both associate such consciousness with the slave: Hölderlin with the Pauline terms ('In the form of a slave', l. 35) of a divine kenosis in which God submits to human time and human device in order to break and redeem them;[4] Hegel with the disruption, by the slave's coming to self-knowledge, of the economy of desire (*Begierde*) and possessive enjoyment (*Genuß*, HW, III, 151) in which the master held power. And Hegel identifies one activity as characterising the new consciousness which now becomes possible: work – the working over of natural objects no longer in order to present them for a master's contingent satisfaction, but because consciousness sees in the objects of its work its own independence, its own freedom (HW, III, 154). In the subsequent account of revealed religion in the *Phenomenology*, that knowledge of human freedom – of subjectivity's being able to choose for itself the terms in which it understands the world – will be seen as resulting from the manifestation of divine love to historical consciousness (HW, III, 552), its being grasped through the spiritual community's self-reflection, or what Hegel calls the mode of 'representation' (*Vorstellen*: HW, III, 556). Hegel's conjunction of the theology of history with the world of human work, and especially of things (*das Ding*, HW, III, 153) – which always, Hegel says, carry within themselves the primal fear of death (HW, III, 154) in which social being arises and is transformed – is of profound significance in assessing further the literary significance of Idealism.

The figure in literature who symbolises with greatest depth the claims and tensions of German Idealism as the language of modern self-understanding is Goethe's Faust. Since its gestation, from Goethe's resumption of the project following its earlier versions to the completion of *Part Two*, stretched from Fichte's *First Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* (*Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, 1797) to the death of Hegel (1831), *Faust* not only spans the age of Idealism itself, but also anticipates Idealism's own subsequent impact. Working on the play in the 1790s, Goethe consciously made contemporary Idealist philosophy part of his protagonist's characterisation. It has been shown that the defining scene of Faust's wager is suggestive of arguments put forward by Fichte – namely, of Fichte's distinction between the dogmatist who defines his experience by reference to the independence of external

things (*Selbständigkeit des Dinges*), and the Idealist who finds that at the centre of his experience lies his own self (*Selbständigkeit des Ich*).[5] In his own developing philosophy, especially in his critique of Fichtean subjective Idealism in *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* (*Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie*, 1801), a copy of which Goethe possessed,[6] Hegel radically modified that distinction between the independence of things and the independence of the self. An eventual product of this modification was his notion of the self finding its own independence reflected objectively in the things with which it enters into a dialectical relation through work. The *Phenomenology* was finished in the same year as *Faust Part One* (1806) and published one year before it.

When Faust wagers that he will find no value in the world – only in his capacity to experience it – he articulates a determination not to recognise any constraint on his freedom, which is to say, anything that would, as he sees it, make him a slave ('If I should ever stop, I shall be a slave', l. 1710).[b] Such slavery would be identical with death: Faust wagers against the possibility that any object of his experience could be so significant as to arrest his experience of objects, and such arrest would mean the end of any life he is interested in living. He is sure that he will never experience primal fear of an 'absolute master', because he reserves that description for his own free self. And tragically, neither the modest objects that populate Gretchen's room nor, in *Part Two*, the labour of those he exploits, will reflect to Faust that limit on his own existence which binds it into a social – and representable – world. But the limit is not vanquished because of Faust's refusal to recognise it, as in Hegel's analysis it is not vanquished by the master's enjoyment of power and possession (the word *Genuß* is associated with Faust throughout the play, and in *Part Two* he names its objects: 'dominion . . . property', l. 10187).[c] Such desire remains unredeemed from contingency and material decay, from death, which, kept external to consciousness, cannot be transformed. Rather, the limit expresses itself in that world of determinacy and relationships to which Faust denies meaning, and supremely in the two moments where his denial (produced by commitment to Mephistopheles' principle of – significantly – time-bound negation: 'I am the spirit who *always* denies' (l. 1338)) is itself denied (negated) absolutely.[d] In the exchange between Faust and Gretchen in the scene 'A Garden House',

b. 'Wie ich beharre, bin ich *Knecht*' (added emphasis). Quotations from *Faust* follow Erich Trunz (ed.), *Goethes Werke: Hamburger Ausgabe*, 14 vols. (Hamburg: Wegner, 1949), III.

c. 'Herrschaft . . . Eigentum'.

d. 'Ich bin der Geist, der *stets* verneint' (added emphasis).

Goethe – himself neither part of the cultural milieu of German Idealism nor sympathetic to what he perceived as its ambitions – articulates what might be taken as the central claim of absolute Idealist thought: that the negation of time and contingency and desire cannot ultimately be understood as negation at all, and that the only adequate word is love. To that insight Hölderlin alone gives equally powerful literary expression. In *Part Two*, the parallel moment of Faust's meeting with Helen of Troy gives rise to a similar recognition – also immediately interrupted by Mephistopheles – of existence beyond his wager, when he says to Helen: 'Do not weigh up unique destiny | Existence is duty even if it lasts only a moment' (ll. 9417–9418).[e] Destiny – 'Geschick': Hölderlin's word for the fated self, constituted by the particularity of finite relations in which is disclosed to it, as the utterance of an ethical commandment, its (infinite) freedom[7] – is unique and therefore not reducible to the terms in which Faust has chosen to see his experience, of comparison, weighing up (*durchgrübeln*) and rejection in favour of the next moment. To exist as fated – to be in the world, 'dasein' – is to be subject to those relations which, since they cannot be mastered or possessed or discarded, are revelations of freedom from the appetitive quest for objects – that is, of beauty (touched by Faust in the form of Helen's hand (l. 9384)). We cannot in this context consider the full consequences of Faust's refusal to heed the words he himself has uttered. But we can in this context point to the well-known elements of self-consciousness in the play: to Goethe's own appearance in it and, especially, to the fact that it has two endings.[8] As the violent effects of Faust's wager gather pace, and as Faust's own death approaches, Goethe's *Faust* draws attention ever more emphatically to its own status as representation, and so to the limit of its representations – specifically, to its own inability to formulate a definitive pronouncement on the life it has depicted, to adjudicate between the two endings: between the eternal metaphysical emptiness (l. 11603) of a universe defined by Faustian material desire; and the possibility of redemption through love. Insofar as it passes that duty of interpretation to its audience or readers, and therefore opens, in the moment of Faust's death, all its representations to the ethical being of a world to which it defers and which may find in it a truth the play cannot (absolutely) speak, *Faust* delineates the philosophical and moral relation of representation and reality which will inform, in very different ways, much thought and literature developing in the aftermath of absolute Idealism.

e. 'Durchgrüble nicht das einzigste Geschick! | Dasein ist Pflicht, und wär's ein Augenblick.'

The tragic realism of *Faust Part One*, and of the *Sturm und Drang* drama (especially of J. M. R. Lenz), was the main literary element taken up by Georg Büchner in opposition to Idealism – which in the 1830s, when all Büchner's works were written, no longer took the form of Hegelian philosophy as represented by Hegel himself, but of developing Hegelianism. This is one reason why Büchner's 'anti-Idealism' was never going to equate to a materialist outlook.[9] Philosophical materialism of the period emerged as part of Hegelianism, and in origin understood itself as an attempt at critical redefinition of the master's ideas, especially in terms of a natural or immanent (rather than dialectical, in Hegel's terms) view of spirit. In Büchner's story *Lenz* (published 1839), an explicit attitude towards Idealism is expressed by the main character in a discussion of art, the so-called *Kunstgespräch*. This occurs around a third of the way into the story, after Lenz's acquaintance Kaufmann arrives in the Alsatian village of Waldbach, disturbing the sense of peace Lenz has found there:

> The Idealist period was beginning then; Kaufmann was one of its supporters, Lenz argued strongly against it. He said: The poets who are said to give us reality have no idea of it either, but they are still more bearable than those who want to transfigure reality.[f]

Immediately upon Lenz's identification of Idealist authors with the desire to transfigure the world, follows his theology of art: 'Loving God has no doubt made the world as it's supposed to be, and we probably can't daub a better one; our sole effort should be to recreate a little of what he has made.'[g] Lenz's comments may be derived from Büchner's reading of the historical Lenz and his dramatic theories, but the allusion even to the 'beginnings' of the Idealist period is anachronistic in a story putatively set in 1778, so we need have no difficulty in referring to the absolute Idealism that had produced the dominant philosophical and aesthetic mode of the period when *Lenz* was written.[10] The most obvious fact about Lenz's speech, formulated in the face of 'Idealism' and its disciples, is that far from putting forward an account – either of aesthetics or of theology – that opposes the premises

f. 'Die idealistische Periode fing damals an, Kaufmann war ein Anhänger davon, Lenz widersprach heftig. Er sagte: Die Dichter, von denen man sage, sie geben die Wirklichkeit, hätten auch keine Ahnung davon, doch seien sie immer noch erträglicher, als die welche die Wirklichkeit verklären wollten.' Georg Büchner, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Henri Poschmann, 2 vols. (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1992), I, 234.

g. 'Der liebe Gott hat die Welt wohl gemacht wie sie sein soll, und wir können wohl nicht was Besseres klecksen, unser einziges Bemühen soll sein, ihm ein wenig nachzuschaffen.' *Ibid.*

of absolute Idealism, it is in fact entirely in tune with its aims and presuppositions. Thus, Lenz argues that it is the task of art not primarily to put aesthetic questions of beauty, but to reproduce in a limited way the act of God in creating the world. Art's purpose is to capture that quality of the world's being made by God – the fact 'that Something has been created'[h] – and thus reflect the value of created finite things. This good, following Lenz's argument, is the gratuitous giving of life by God in creation, which is why the attempt to transfigure reality, identified by Lenz as characteristic of Idealism, is contemptuous and inhumane (234). But the terms he deploys most vehemently against the representatives of Idealism – 'Life, possibility of existence'[i] – are themselves resonant watchwords of philosophical Idealism, and his insistence that the truth of art is inconceivable outside ethical truth, and that both derive their warrant from a link between human subjective understanding and divine love, corresponds directly to the central claims of absolute Idealist thought.[11] Lenz's attack on Idealism, then, hardly has at its core criticism of an Idealist understanding of subjectivity itself. It does, however, most certainly represent a criticism of any aspiration – philosophical or, perhaps especially, aesthetic – to understand the world of human life with reference to a supposed higher truth, which art might be thought to capture:[12] 'One . . . should lower oneself into the life of the meanest person and reproduce it.'[j]

Lenz's preference in art is for Dutch painting, which inspires in him precisely the feeling that here, tangibly and without the need for any flight into exteriority, is life and nature (235).[13] His account of the ethical significance of Dutch art has a striking philosophical predecessor where, on the surface at least, Lenz would not lead us to expect it – in the major Idealist theory of art, Hegel's aesthetics. The greatness of Dutch genre painting, for Hegel, lies in its devotion to modest things: 'in the care and appreciation of the most negligible'.[k] Hegel's account offers striking parallels to the claims made by Lenz in Büchner's story, describing art as a caring form of attention to the smallest and most mundane aspects of life. Art has as its object of care the 'prose of life', in Hegel's words, or in Lenz's the 'most prosaic people under the sun'.[l]

But Lenz's vision of aesthetic and ethical subjectivity, in which the particularity of suffering lives is disclosed as a reflection of divine love, is not

h. 'Daß Was geschaffen sei', *Ibid.* i. 'Leben, Möglichkeit des Daseins', *Ibid.*
j. 'Man . . . senke sich in das Leben des Geringsten und gebe es wieder.' *Ibid.*
k. 'In der Sorge und der Wertschätzung des Geringfügigsten', HW, xiv, 225.
l. 'Die Prosa des Lebens', HW, xiv, 226; 'die prosaischsten Menschen unter der Sonne', *Lenz*, 234.

borne out by the rest of Büchner's story. Indeed, what Lenz envisages as the aim of art issues in its negation when he is confronted with the actual suffering and death of a child: 'It seemed to him . . . as though he could . . . spit in the Creator's face.'[m] In short, the claims of the *Kunstgespräch* lose all bearing. Büchner's story is defined by a rift between Lenz's subjective understanding and the objective world, and more specifically by Lenz's consciousness of that rift and his awareness that it cannot be healed. Indeed, there is only one point in Büchner's story at which those two elements (subjective and objective) may be said to correspond. This is the episode of his preaching in Oberlin's church, in which, uniquely, Lenz's suffering appears to him as something shared: 'He spoke simply with the people, they all suffered with him, and it was for him a consolation.'[n] Here Lenz finds himself in a condition of relation which cannot be defined only through reference to his self-understanding: he is receptive to the experience of others imposing itself from outside the structures of his own subjective consciousness, and this grants an objective character to his own experience – his own suffering and alienation – which is not possible when that experience becomes a cause for self-absorption. Philosophically, we might see Lenz's experience in the church at Waldbach in terms of a fleeting congruence of subjective and objective truth, and so as the revelation of a truth, about a world of suffering, that can be called absolute.

Philosophically, however, the part of Büchner's story that articulates these terms of absolute Idealism – the *Kunstgespräch* – is itself expressive of the alienation that haunts Lenz for the rest of the narrative, and is, as the product of his subjective mind rather than of any properly receptive consciousness, in fact, in conflict with true ethical self-knowledge. This touches the paradoxical place of aesthetics in absolute Idealism – captured in Hegel's thesis of the end of art. Art is a mode of Absolute Spirit, but no longer adequate to the truth of modern experience. Lenz's aesthetic vision, we might say, contains a powerful account of ethical and religious subjectivity, but collapses into self-negation in a world demanding ethical and religious reflection. A properly adequate account of experience, for Hegel, cannot be aesthetic, since art – which concerns itself with sensuous immediacy, as Lenz repeatedly suggests – does not have the means to capture the reflective self-consciousness that characterises modernity. But there is a conflict underlying Hegel's account, which Büchner's *Lenz* reveals: namely,

m. 'Es war ihm . . . als könnte er . . . dem Schöpfer in's Gesicht speien.' *Lenz*, 242.
n. 'Er sprach einfach mit den Leuten, sie litten alle mit ihm, und es war ihm ein Trost', *Ibid.*, 231.

that reflective self-consciousness itself, which might be said to be the basic theme and narrative principle of *Lenz*, is involved in a tension with the conditions of experience that make it possible, and in which subjectivity has been cut off from organic immediacy. Accordingly, it follows paradoxically that 'the reconciliation with reality which art once promised is needed more than ever'.[14] Modern consciousness seeks that reconciliation in a form that is necessarily alienated from the ethical substance that defines it and that it tries to comprehend. Lenz attempts to experience and understand the world in the terms suggested by his aesthetic vision – that is, the terms of a thoroughgoing philosophical Idealism – but this produces a turn away from the properly reflective self-understanding achieved briefly through empathetic receptivity, towards the adoption of an inactive detachment which does not reach out into any objective ethical world or system of needs, and which therefore serves not the self's reconciliation but its further estrangement. Yet this state, though it characterises Büchner's protagonist to the end, is not the final impression left by the story. Through the sympathetic third-person narration that articulates Lenz's experience of alienation, but is clearly not identical with the workings of his own self-conscious mind, his suffering acquires an objectivity that his subjective awareness cannot bestow upon it, and that makes that correspondence, or reconciliation, between mind and world – glimpsed early in the story and never again reached – appear both as something lost and fragile, and as something present and recoverable. Perhaps, then, the tension suggested by the engagement with Idealism in *Lenz* is only properly graspable in dialectical terms after all: the reconciliation sought by the alienated mind is removed from the claims of art, but it is not removed from the possibilities of representation – Büchner's representation of Lenz. Representation always, dialectically speaking, expresses alienation,[15] but in it emerges the consciousness of a community (HW, III, 556) addressed by a truth (Lenz's divine love), which is in excess of all representations but revealed through them.

Fragile presence, tinged by loss, is also the dominant element in the work of Eduard Mörike. Mörike's intersection with Idealism, though, occurs in the context of the nineteenth-century theological legacy of the Tübingen *Stift*, which he, like Hölderlin, attended. If Hölderlin and Mörike are poetic representatives of that legacy, then the trajectory they describe meets a philosophical lineage running from Hegel's account of religion in *Phenomenology of Spirit* to its effective deconstruction by Mörike's contemporary and acquaintance, David Friedrich Strauss (like Hegel also formerly of the Tübingen seminary). In seeking to apply Hegelian thought in the practice of

biblical criticism, Strauss in *The Life of Jesus* (*Das Leben Jesu*, 1835) disconnected the Christian narrative from its place within an interpretative community – from what Hegel identified as the historical locus of spirit – and reduced it to the mere *material* of contingently generated myth. Mörike, who himself withdrew from the life of the pastor into that of private symbolic meaning expressed in his poems, remained – unlike Strauss – troubled by that shift into a world of material contingency, and its various objects haunt the tranquil surfaces of his work with unquiet urgency.

Mörike's objects, whether natural or manufactured, threaten the fulfilment whose possibility they suggest. His poem 'On a Christmas Rose' ('Auf eine Christblume', 1841), having begun in reciprocity between subjective persona and external world, moves into a subtly evoked estrangement that is in direct proportion to the effort the persona expends in ascribing to the flower a revelatory potential. Indeed, that redemption of the subject's time into sacramental meaning remains *only* potential or, in the poem's language, subjunctive: 'A reminder of the holy Passion | Five drops of purple would beautifully and singly attire you'.[o] There is felt here, typically for Mörike, a hairline fracture between subjectivity and the world it experiences, and that disjuncture spreads, coming almost beneath our notice to define the poem, and issuing in a distance and division which seem unbridgeable. But the poem in its closing image holds forth a possibility of fulfilment and reciprocity, hinging on the – perhaps self-consciously – emphatic invocation of spirit (*Geist*):

> But who knows whether its tender spirit,
> When the flowering of summer has past,
> Will not one day, drunk on your gentle scent
> And unseen by me, encircle you in your bloom?[p]

Mörike refers to the central category of the Idealist historical understanding, by which thought comprehends reality, and whose properly dialectical working was challenged by the insistence on seeing consciousness as determined by the operations of some natural or, as Strauss was suggesting by 1840, 'immanent' phenomenon.[16] We might construe this variously as sensuous nature, which, Ludwig Feuerbach argued in *The Essence of Christianity*

o. 'Dich würden, mahnend an das heil'ge Leiden, | Fünf Purpurtropfen schön und einzig kleiden' (ll. 21–2). Quotations from Mörike follow Eduard Mörike, *Werke und Briefe: historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Hubert Arbogast, Hans-Henrik Krummacher *et al.*, 19 vols. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1967ff.), I.

p. 'Wer aber weiß, ob nicht sein zarter Geist, | Wenn jede Zier des Sommers hingesunken, | Dereinst, von deinem leisen Dufte trunken, | Mir unsichtbar, dich blühende umkreist?' (ll. 33–6).

(*Das Wesen des Christentums*, 1841), could be properly grasped only by recognising the illusions of self-projection, or as the 'drive for knowledge',[17] which in its primitive form led religion to generate its myths, making necessary its dismantling by the exponent of truly modern *Wissenschaft* (Strauss). The threat to consciousness, and to a world of relationship and ethical meaning, posed by descent into realms posited as prior to reflective thought – that is, of strictly speaking subconscious activity – is felt in 'On a Christmas Rose'.[18] And to that threat, in its final questioning cadence, the poem responds, expressing the fragile possibility of a transforming relation between reflecting subject and encountered world, which it remains beyond that subject's (and this poem's) power to represent.

The alienation of religious consciousness is a theme which Mörike shares with Feuerbach in his theory of projection, and with Strauss, who described it in the related terms of a self haunted by its own phantom likeness. Selfhood is recuperated into unity, Strauss argues, by the realisation that the contents of supposed revelation are nothing but the rationally formed truths of a purely non-transcendent humanism: 'In revelation man recognises his own laws . . . once more; he offers the *Doppelgänger* his hand: and it disappears by going back into man himself.'[q] Here the ghostly double equates to Hegelian representation (*Vorstellen*) – explicitly identified by Hegel as the realm of religious images (HW, III, 575) – which for Strauss evaporates once it is penetrated by properly emancipated awareness, that is, by a mind aloof from, and thus able to diagnose the underlying movements of, vulgar belief. Characteristically and prophetically, Strauss arrogates such redemption from self-estrangement to the educated possessors of true knowledge: 'But this process is only for the educated'.[r] In the twentieth century, this coexistence, originating in the post-Hegelian mind, of a postulated determining subconsciousness and the claims of sovereign detachment, will animate the frequent union of psychoanalysis and deconstruction.

Mörike's late poem 'Erinna to Sappho' ('Erinna an Sappho', 1863) also uses the motifs of mirror image and *Doppelgänger*. Erinna relates in a verse epistle to Sappho how, unplaiting her hair one morning, she caught her reflection in the mirror and experienced a sudden and visceral intimation of mortality – she reports the words she spoke to her deathly self-image, which

q. 'In der Offenbarung erkennt der Mensch seine eigenen Gesetze . . . wieder; er reicht dem doppelgängerischen Ebenbilde die Hand: und es verschwindet, indem es in ihn selbst zurückgeht.' Strauss, *Christliche Glaubenslehre*, I, 355.

r. 'Doch nur für den Wissenden ist dieser Process', *Ibid.* See Toews, *Hegelianism*, 285: 'Strauss's new cultural stance of 1840 implied a radical division between the mass of the uneducated people and the educated elite.'

allude, characteristically for Mörike, to an alienation that is first gentle and then, in the strict sense of the word, awful: 'How with estranging earnest, half smiling, a demon, | You nod at me, prophesying death!'[s] 'Erinna to Sappho' combines the existential idiom of Hölderlin and the realistic details of *Faust Part One*, which Büchner also incorporated into the domestic scenes of his fragmentary dramatic masterpiece *Woyzeck*. What connects them is their shared definition by death – the abyss which opens up in the moment of reflection:

> And I considered my own mortal fate;
> Still with a dry eye at first,
> Until I thought of you, Sappho,
> And all our friends.[t]

Death, for Mörike as subsequently for Martin Heidegger, is one's own, unique death: 'das eigene'.[19] Reflection, in which death is revealed, is Erinna's mirroring (the self looking at itself, as in Strauss' image) and it is meditation – thought – as Mörike's verbs suggest: 'erwog' and then 'dachte'. However, the intimation of death erupts into consciousness, but consciousness holds it and projects it, elegiacally, not into a realm of aloof individual existence, but into a social world. Erinna's sudden confrontation with death is powerful because the thought of her own dying is inseparable from the thought that all her relationships too are founded on the fact of death, of their finitude and ultimate negation.[20] Indeed, it is the realisation of death, in Mörike's poem, which leads in the final lines to the emergence of a communal consciousness: a 'wir' (l. 36). 'Erinna to Sappho' closes with the hope (ll. 39–41) that the world of social being, and of meaningful, made objects symbolising human relationships (l. 34), may not be eclipsed too soon. But that world can be understood, the poem makes clear, only in relation to its ending – to the negation of every particular existence acknowledgement of which, for Hegel, brings social existence into being and frees the self from alienation in material desire (HW, III, 153–4). And so, in the moment of self-reflection, Mörike finds revealed not simply the abyss of finitude, but the shared conditions of a shared consciousness. That is very different, not only from the implications extracted by Strauss from his use of the same

s. 'Wie mit fremdendem Ernst, lächelnd halb, ein Dämon, | Nickst du mich an, Tod weissagend!' (ll. 21–2).

t. 'Und das eigene Todesgeschick erwog ich; | Trockenen Augs noch erst, | Bis ich dein, o Sappho, dachte, | Und der Freundinnen all' (ll. 28–31).

motif, but also from the whole range of materialist philosophical assumptions which defined his age, and which were constantly in tension between a vision of immanent wholeness and a highly discrete and unrelational view of the self. For all Feuerbach's proclamations of a fully realised community of integral human 'species consciousness', no such intimation of the complexity, contingency and meaning of social, historical life can be drawn from his philosophy as emerges from a single poem of Mörike's, since for Feuerbach achieving that state is explicitly a matter of self-cultivation which knows no limit on its own 'productive' activity, and so, implicitly, recognises neither death, which would limit the realisation of our natural essence, nor relationship – other people – which would limit our desire: 'Activity . . . which is in accord with our essence, which we do not feel as a barrier, and therefore not as a constraint. The happiest, most blissful activity is productive activity.'[u]

Where the poetry of Mörike might be seen, obliquely, to hold out against the developing materialist concerns of post-Hegelian thought, the work of Friedrich Hebbel explicitly draws on Hegelian conceptions for its philosophical underpinning, but demonstrates, ultimately, a view of history which sits more comfortably within a materialist dialectic, or with the determinist implications of a metaphysics of will such as Arthur Schopenhauer's. Like Büchner, with whom he is sometimes (not usually favourably) compared, Hebbel wrote dramas dealing with the fate of individuals caught up in historical processes. His abiding interest in historical conflict, and especially the terms in which he chose to see it, reflect the encounter, in the time he was writing, between the new secular and commercial (material) imperatives of state-building (the *Gründerzeit*) and the inherited claims of religiously inspired Idealism (warring factions, and their tragic victims, are the subject of *Agnes Bernauer* (1852)). In a poem accompanying *Maria Magdalene* (1843), Hebbel describes his dramas as arising from an excess of artistic genius (*Genius*), an explanation pointing equally to a derivative Idealist aesthetics and to the more individualist preoccupations characterising the age of Strauss.[21] Unlike Büchner, Hebbel presents conflict with a schematic clarity that suggests that his dramas themselves have little trouble finding historical processes transparent and comprehensible. The plays often show characters either failing to grasp change (as when in *Maria Magdalene* Meister Anton, the intransigent and domineering representative of a hidebound morality and

u. 'Thätigkeit . . . die mit unserem Wesen übereinstimmt, die wir nicht als Schranke, folglich nicht als Zwang empfinden. Die glücklichste, seligste Thätigkeit ist jedoch die producirende.' Ludwig Feuerbach and *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Hans-Martin Sass, 13 vols. (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1962), VI, 262.

obsession with honour, rendered passive by the events of the play, finally utters the words: 'I don't understand the world anymore!'[v]), or tragically falling victim to attitudes which are not changing quickly enough (Klara, the Mary Magdalene of the title). These tensions are understood by Hebbel to reflect the operations of a world-historical process (*der welthistorische Proceß* (I, 310), as he calls it in the lengthy preface to the play) in the lives of communities. But the dramas tend to construct tension with a relentless certainty of exposition and development, which can hardly suggest an origin in the opaque contingency of social and historical being as dramatised by Büchner in *Woyzeck* or *The Death of Danton* (*Dantons Tod*), and given lyric expression in 'Erinna to Sappho'.

Treating the – as he says – 'discredited' genre of bourgeois tragedy to which *Maria Magdalene* represents an innovative contribution, Hebbel insists that tragic drama must dispense with all externalities (I, 326) of motivation or social opposition (especially those associated with the genre's traditional conflicts between bourgeoisie and aristocracy), in order to present instead a sense of inexorable necessity which fates tragic characters in advance of any contingent determinations: 'for the tragic must appear as something conditioned beforehand by necessity, as something posited with life itself – like death'.[w] Here we clearly recognise the insight, developed by Hegel at a central juncture of the *Phenomenology*, that all social being and relations of power – the subject of *Maria Magdalene* as of all previous instances of the *bürgerliches Trauerspiel* – are based on, and suffused by, death. What is missing (indeed, it seems, consciously overridden) is Hegel's implication that the workings of negativity in all its forms (whether in death or, ultimately, the 'absolute' negation which transforms death) do not *precede* a world of contingent desires, particularity and, most strikingly of all given the play's social setting, work – rather they arise with that world, and can be properly grasped only by a consciousness (dramatic or otherwise) which understands itself as part of it. *Maria Magdalene* moves with dramatic urgency towards the death of its central figure, suggesting a universal suffering and a vulnerability even of those (such as Meister Anton) who make the tragic outcome inevitable. But despite this, at no point does death impinge as the 'absolute master' of Hegel's analysis – which is to say, nowhere does it take on the aspect of something in excess of the dramatist's ability to impose it. (And in this regard Hebbel is always in danger of complicity with the violence he

v. 'Ich verstehe die Welt nicht mehr!' F. Hebbel, *Werke*, I, 382.

w. 'Denn das Tragische muß als ein von vornherein mit Notwendigkeit Bedingtes, als ein, wie der Tod, mit dem Leben selbst Gesetztes . . . auftreten', *Ibid.*, I, 326.

depicts.) There is scarcely ever that sense (connecting *Faust*, *Woyzeck* and, indeed, Mörike's poetry) of an encounter between individuals that, quite beyond the exigencies of narrative, reveals them united in desire and love and finitude – what Faust calls 'Dasein' and Büchner catches in the glint of a reflected earring:

> Marie: *Looking in the mirror*. 'It must be gold! People like us only have a little corner in the world and a bit of mirror but my mouth is just as red as the grand madams with their mirrors from up there to down here . . . I'm just a poor wench . . . ' *she flashes the glass*.
>
> *Woyzeck enters, behind her. She raises her hands to her ears.*
>
> Woyzeck: 'What have you got?'
>
> Marie: 'Nothing.'[x]

Hebbel's domestic interiors also present us with a world of objects, but it is a world completely and obviously determined by the function of plot, that is, by the constructing eye of the dramatist. Thus, in the denouement of *Maria Magdalene*:

> Karl: 'You could bring me a glass of water, but it has to be really fresh!'
>
> Klara *quickly*: 'I'll get it for you from the well!'[y]

The glass here (which Klara takes to the well in which she then drowns herself) certainly bears the force of death, but it is death projected into this dramatic world as a necessity of narrative. Death thus presented is not anything that might be said to define, or limit, the possibility of narrative itself, and on account of which the modest object – and the singular lives to which it attaches – manifest a value that is, despite the terrible, encompassing suffering named by Marie in *Woyzeck*, not nothing. Without a full recognition of such value, and so without the properly felt threat of its loss, Hebbel's play forfeits the distilled tragic substance he says it should achieve. Philosophically, Hebbel's implied distance from a realm of complex and never quite self-transparent ethical relation, and his tendency to view the moral essence of

x. 'Marie: *Spiegelt sich wieder*. "S'ist gewiß Gold! Unsereins hat nur ein Eckchen in der Welt und ein Stückchen Spiegel und doch hab ich ein so rothe Mund als die großen Madamen mit ihren Spiegeln von oben bis unten . . . ich bin nur ein arm Weibbild . . . " *sie blinkt mit dem Glas*.
*Woyzeck tritt herein, hinter sie. Sie fährt auf mit d. Händen nach d. Ohren.*
Woyzeck: "Was hast du?"
Marie: "Nix."' Büchner, *Sämtliche Werke*, i, 204–5.

y. 'Karl: "Ein Glas Wasser könntest du mir noch bringen, aber es muß recht frisch sein!"
Klara *schnell*: "Ich will es dir vom Brunnen holen!"' Hebbel, *Werke*, i, 378.

his characters in terms of claim and counterclaim between variously assertive and submissive positions, belongs to the area of what Feuerbach two years before *Maria Magdalene* called 'activity': the operations of unlimited material being, which inevitably eclipse concern with the uniqueness of finite lives.

Hebbel's prefatory note to a later play, *Gyges and his Ring* (*Gyges und sein Ring*, 1854), states more explicitly, and in terms which point forward to further encounters with the Idealist legacy in drama, that continuity with the assumptions of post-Hegelian materialist accounts of history: 'The action is pre-historical and mythic.'[z] That is, Hebbel has arrived at a mode of dramatic representation that is not, strictly, historical at all, but rather pre-historical, which is not to say that the patterns that Hebbel derived from dialectical historical thought have been dispensed with. From the conceptual justification for, and the dramatic practice of, *Maria Magdalene* has emerged an emphasis on the 'mythical'. And there is a connection between that implicitly uninvolved, dispassionate stance towards his characters' lives, together with the precise though narrow method of developing their fates, which Hebbel demonstrated in the earlier play, and subsequent works such as *Gyges* and the trilogy *The Nibelungs* (*Die Nibelungen*, whose ending is still bleaker), which recast history in terms of myth. For in making dramatic plot 'mythical', Hebbel draws close to the implications which that term had for Strauss as, also on alleged Hegelian principles, he took up a standpoint beyond (Christian) history, so as to deconstruct it: *The Life of Jesus* was reissued with a *Gründerzeit* inflection of the subtitle ('revised for the German nation': 'für das deutsche Volk bearbeitet') in 1864. In parallel to Strauss' basing religion on myth, Feuerbach placed the universal operations (*Thätigkeit*, *Handlung*) of sensuous natural being prior to conceptual thought and so to historical consciousness. Hebbel sees a world of all-determining tragic necessity defined solely by the violence that individuals suffer and inflict. In simultaneously immersing us in that violent world and colluding with it by fashioning suffering into the clear schemes of his dramatic art, Hebbel, for all the outrage he feels at the world's horrors, reproduces the tension characteristic of Hegelianism's material turn in all its forms, between recognition of a conditioning stratum of conflict and striving (coupled with an ethical impulse found also in Feuerbach's notion of love as adequately comprehended nature), and the unitary authority of the philosophical or aesthetic consciousness which uncovers it. It is on account of all these elements, but especially suffering and Art, that the presiding intellectual temperament of his work – even before Hebbel

z. 'Die Handlung ist vorgeschichtlich und mythisch.'

read and met him in 1857, in a pause in his engagement with the Siegfried myth – is that of Schopenhauer, and of Hegel only insofar as he is a critical prerequisite for Schopenhauer, as for Strauss and Feuerbach too.[22]

By the time Hebbel was producing his later plays, the post-Hegelian legacy was apparent in an altogether more dramatic form in the writings of Richard Wagner. There, the characteristic concern with myth takes on a quasi-religious function not found in Hebbel, which connects Wagner perhaps more vitally to the secularised theology of Idealism, as well as to the line in German drama which draws on the aesthetic humanism of Schiller. Where Hebbel propounded only implicitly a Feuerbachian view of 'activity' as forming the core of drama, Wagner, in his essays following the events of 1848, and in disappointment at the ensuing prospects for political change, consciously adopted the ethical terms which Feuerbach derived from his account of sensuous striving and need. For Wagner, a true revolution could emerge only from 'the thrust of pure human need'.[aa] Feuerbach's notion of 'need', developed in *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* (*Gedanken über Tod und Unsterblichkeit*, 1830), which Wagner read in 1848 or 1849,[23] describes the naked vulnerability and longing of natural being as preceding and determining all operations of consciousness. Wagner turns the analysis of need in the aesthetic direction which Büchner, in *Lenz*, rejected, and in so doing finds in need the basis of revolutionary art – or a definition of the human beyond history.

In the writings he produced from 1849 ('The Revolution', 'Die Revolution') to 1851 ('Opera and Drama', 'Oper und Drama'), Wagner developed a conception of music drama which reflects, more than any other literary enterprise of the period, the post-Hegelian superseding of dialectical – that is, historical – consciousness by the claims of natural, sensuous (material) existence under the aegis of 'myth'. 'Wagner's postrevolutionary aesthetic was based on a fundamental contrast between the "human", which was expressed in myth, and "convention", which was expressed in history.'[24] In seeing myth 'as the pure and timeless expression of the human', and history 'as its insubstantial shell',[25] Wagner was articulating – with the vehemence of one disillusioned by the tide of recent historical experience – a view close to Strauss' in his deconstruction of historical Christianity (towards which Wagner was also becoming hostile) for the purpose of uncovering its

aa. 'Aus dem Drange des rein menschlichen Bedürfnisses', Richard Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen* (hereafter GSD), 2nd edn, 10 vols. (Leipzig: Fritzsch, 1887), IV, 310.

mythic foundations. And Wagner's account of how he arrived at the foundations of Germanic myth (GSD, IV, 312), by removing 'garment by garment' (*ibid.*) its subsequent distortions, in fact uses the same image (of divestment) that underlies Strauss' concern to tear away the cloak of historical truth placed by the scriptures around the founding stories of religion.[26] Just as Strauss initially claimed, in fulfilment of his 'Hegelian' premises, to resurrect a speculative religious truth from his critique of the Bible, Wagner first responded to the philosophy of natural longing and sensuous activity with his own attempted life of Jesus (the draft sketch *Jesus of Nazareth* (*Jesus von Nazareth*), 1849), in which a Feuerbachian Christ sacrifices his individual selfhood to bring about universal love (the realisation of species consciousness). Wagner's swift abandonment of the project on account of the incongruence (as he says) between its subject matter and his own 'modern consciousness' (GSD, IV, 332), and his turning, instead, briefly to classical myth and then to the *Nibelungenlied* which was also occupying Hebbel, presage the later Strauss' acknowledgement that in the world that post-Hegelian analyses such as his own had helped to define, 'we are Christians no longer'.[bb] The love – which is to say, the fulfilment of human need – that Feuerbach formulated as the adequate comprehension of natural being or sensuous activity through self-cultivation, could not be limited to the notion of an incarnate God which religion had conceived to satisfy its longing, but had rather to embrace the pre-conceptual source of that longing itself. Accordingly, for Wagner, the tenets of traditional religion are only the inadequate expression of various human drives (GSD, IV, 332).

The implications, for Wagner's dramatic art, of this view of need and the operations of longing, are most apparent from his essays 'The Artwork of the Future' ('Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft', 1849) and 'Opera and Drama'. These pieces also represent his own clearest expression of the characteristic tension between assuming a visceral, pre-historical and pre-conscious realm and affirming the consciousness of the thinker or writer in relation to it. Strauss, having laid bare the operations of myth in *The Life of Jesus*, came to insist on the elevated primacy of *Wissenschaft*; Feuerbach, in taking over more clearly the essence manifest in religion into the humanist critique, in order to reveal there its full – non-theological – aspect, emphasised the privileged, 'productive' self-development (what he calls *Bildung*) of non-alienated consciousness, and thus reserved for the activity of his own thought a function beyond the

bb. 'Wir sind keine Christen mehr.' David Friedrich Strauss, *Der alte und der neue Glaube: ein Bekenntnis*, 4th edn (Bonn: Strauss, 1873), 94.

pre-conceptual, organic workings of sensuous nature it diagnosed.[27] Wagner continues this trend by seeking after a phenomenon in which myth is simultaneously disclosed as utmost presence and delimited in such a way that the consciousness bringing it forth is not itself vulnerable to analysis as 'mythical'. This he finds in Greek tragedy, which in 'The Artwork of the Future' and 'Opera and Drama' is given a derivative dialectical reading in terms of self-consciousness and representation, in the service of a Feuerbachian account of activity (*Handlung*, GSD, III, 104). Wagner argues that Greek tragedy provided a representation of myth itself in its emergence from 'the need of a people to make sense of its natural environment'.[28] In thus representing to the people their own need for, and activity of, self-representation, it satisfied that need in a unique way and thus transfigured natural longing into art (GSD, III, 125). The achievement of the ancient tragedians, for Wagner, was to produce art that is both fully 'alive' (that is, in Feuerbach's terms, fully sensuous and natural) and, in its representation of activity (which is by definition incomplete), aesthetically perfect (GSD, III, 125). This meant that tragedy 'brought myth to its artistic completion'.[29] Implicitly, then, Wagner derived from Greek tragic theatre an understanding of the dramatic artist that fulfilled a central requirement of the post-Hegelian philosophical and aesthetic stance – simultaneous embodiment of, and redemption from, time without history. In providing access to myth, the artist is myth's own consummation (by extension, he stands at the origin of – authentic – history). And since, unlike Büchner but like Hebbel (and in a much more extensive, dramatically no doubt more significant fashion), Wagner turns against the dialectical grain, away from art's opening into subjective alienation and back towards an emphasis on its encompassing sensual certainty, the impression given is one of creator genius ('the artist of the future'[cc]) at once denying history and seeking to shape it.

The social experience generated by ancient tragedy could not, in Wagner's view, be reproduced, but the *Nibelungenlied* offered the possibility of giving dramatic expression, in a German(ic) context, to the aspirations for art which he had drawn from it. In his operatic treatment of the myth, an idea which to the bourgeois-minded Strauss could only seem incredible,[30] Wagner proceeded from a typical alteration of Hegelian principles: the emergence of a contractual world of institutions and socially, legally embodied relation (of objective spirit) is made to coincide with the fateful installation of heavenly gods, so that redemption from that world implies freedom

cc. 'Der Künstler der Zukunft', GSD, III, 160.

from transcendental religion. Indeed, that world, characterised above all for Wagner by private property, is personified by the dwarf Alberich who, lacking (Feuerbachian) love, steals the Rhine gold and becomes an oppressive capitalist. This – anti-Semitic – characterisation reveals strong parallels between Alberich, his caricatured brother Mime and Wagner's description, in his essay *Judaism in Music* (*Das Judenthum in der Musik*, 1850), of 'modern' Jews (GSD, v, 71) as incapable of 'real passion' ('*wahre Leidenschaft*' (GSD, v, 78), that is, true experience of human need) on account of their supposed venality as expressed in, among other things, physical appearance (GSD, v, 73): in *The Rhinegold* Alberich's ugliness is emphasised (GSD, v, 205).[31] Wagner's view posits Judaism as inimical to the whole vital sphere of natural, sensual workings marked out by post-Hegelian thought and defined by Wagner as the realm of myth. In other words, it suggests that Judaism could not, unlike Protestant Christianity, be stripped away into a pre- or post-historical stratum where in various modes redemption was to be sought beyond historical and conceptual determinacy, but rather manifested (more plausibly than the results of Strauss' early 'speculative' manoeuvres) a continuous – and non-national – core of religious meaning and conceptual reflection, which, since it cannot be deconstructed or subsumed, is given the role of primal antagonist.

Wagner's dramatic development, in the *Ring* cycle, of his understanding of myth, took him ultimately – as Hebbel's took him – to the philosopher who anticipated and united all the post-Hegelian accounts of pre-conceptual striving. He first read Schopenhauer in 1854, and immediately appreciated his claim to oppose the lineage of German Idealism, or what Wagner called 'Fichte-Schelling-Hegel nonsense'.[32] Schopenhauer's combination of an ethical emphasis – of the sort derived by Wagner from Feuerbach and his view of love – with the possibility of aesthetic redemption from individual striving through music (as direct, non-representational expression of the universal will (*Wille*)), provided the deepest philosophical analogue to his own view.[33] For Schopenhauer, suffering – passion – constitutes the totality of existence, so glimpses of freedom from it (which are perforce glimpses of not-being) are possible only through grasping it fully: through compassion (*Mitleid*) and through the absolute passivity of aesthetic experience, which may though, as Büchner's *Lenz* suggests, lead to an inactive detachment from others and the loss of redemptive empathy. In the cataclysmic ending to Wagner's final version of the *Ring*, the prospect of Feuerbachian universal love and a humanity reborn from myth – following the collapse of heaven – is revealed as equivalent to the rising up, in the suffering world's eclipse, of Schopenhauerian nothingness.

Strauss, Schopenhauer and Wagner are all themes in the early work of Friedrich Nietzsche. In the first of his *Untimely Meditations* (*Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*), published in 1873 (the year after Strauss' last work), Nietzsche launched a polemic against Strauss the *Bildungsphilister* – the embodiment of the peculiar philistinism of new German nationhood, which, sanctifying 'culture' as the common foundation for the political identity of the formerly independent German states, found in itself the proper fruition of Germany's intellectual and artistic inheritance.[34] For Nietzsche, Strauss represented rather the contamination of that inheritance by the bourgeois sphere of newspapers and share prices (what a later philosophy, sometimes aware of its debt to Nietzsche but oblivious of its debt to Strauss, came to call inauthentic being in the world). Against such complacency, Nietzsche marshals Schopenhauer (in the third *Meditation*), whom he distinguishes – as a genuinely independent thinker – from the academic philosophy that has implicitly signed up to the cultural mores of Strauss (KG, III, 2, 362). And the artistic expression of Nietzsche's 'untimely' sensibility is found, sublimely, in Wagner: 'Thus all those celebrating the Bayreuth festival will be seen as untimely people: their homeland is elsewhere than in time.'[dd]

In taking aim at Strauss, the Hegelian biblical scholar-cum-national man of letters, Nietzsche is protesting against any attempt to fuse the high intellectual inheritance of Idealism with the twin forces of commercial and political expansionism (driven by the liberated individual ego), on the one hand, and of determinist – and scientific – materialism (dwelling on various domains of pre-consciousness), on the other. Nietzsche senses the connection between these forces more keenly than any other figure of the period. When, in the same essay, he describes culture (*Bildung*) as having become inextricable from an economic rationale of production and demand, he goes beyond his predecessors in the post-Hegelian line and pinpoints the fallibility of the would-be redemptive perspectives they seek, effectively rendering Feuerbachian 'productive' self-development identical to the aimless proliferation of capital.[35] Schopenhauer's philosophy seemed to the earlier Nietzsche to offer a defence against these depredations through its high doctrine of aesthetic experience – its promise of freedom from willing, and from time itself, born from the transcendent claim of art.[36] The possibility, in the terms of Schopenhauer's aesthetic account, of an experience of primal oneness and

dd. 'So werden alle Die, welche das Bayreuther Fest begehen, als unzeitgemässe Menschen empfunden werden: sie haben anderswo ihre Heimat als in der Zeit.' KG, IV, 1, 4–5.

a redemption from time, represented in a prosaic era – and in a language more or less continuous with the Idealist tradition that Strauss appeared to have betrayed – a glimmer of that fulfilment which had previously been sought in the philosophical exploration of spirit. But Schopenhauer, like his eventual adept Wagner, saw such redemption as expressing a negation (specifically, a longed for end to suffering), which Nietzsche came to view as life-denying, a 'decadent' way of responding to the naked and inescapable fact of material existence which both supposedly acknowledged.[37] That is, they grounded philosophy and art in a still implicitly Christian ethics derived from the theology of classical (Idealist) German thought, and thus – like Strauss, though in a different way – failed to grasp, and became complicit in, the abyssal nihilism of the post-Idealist age.

Idealism haunts Nietzsche as a rightful intellectual inheritance of which he is deprived by his own historical position. Consequently, it figures (together with Christian religion, which it expressed in secular philosophical terms) simultaneously as the object of his relentless polemical scorn, and as the oblique source of all in his thought that is most powerfully critical of the modern. Philosophically, Nietzsche shares with Schopenhauer, Feuerbach and Strauss the concern with pre-conceptual activity, and his term for it – 'will to power' (*Wille zur Macht*) – unites their various emphases on metaphysical, anthropological and 'mythical' determination with the workings of contemporary political and economic ambition. But in Nietzsche thought, which these thinkers all demoted from its Hegelian position in favour of some other principle, takes on a renewed primacy far beyond the reflex claims of Feuerbachian *Bildung* or Straussian *Wissenschaft*. One expression of this is the variety of imaginative forms and emblematic constellations through which Nietzsche's ideas are given shape, and which is alien to his contemporaries (though not entirely, despite the differences in practice and intent, to the Hegel of the master–slave parable). Thought in Nietzsche's major works, though, functions in obstinate separation from any determinate (or even recognisable) historical or social reference (which is what distinguishes the relation between philosophy and language in Nietzsche from that in Hegel). The speculative inheritance is at once maintained and shut off, preserved from intercourse with a debased world. And this, inevitably, compromises its philosophical potential and draws Nietzsche back into the ambit of more typical post-Hegelianism. Thus, the allegories and landscapes of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (*Also sprach Zarathustra*, 1883–5), comprising all manner of imaginative construction, are removed from any world a reader (however gifted in figurative identification) might share, and

justified only through the disembodied gaze which presents them. The central 'teaching' expounded by Zarathustra – of eternal recurrence – is an exhortation to affirm, and so redeem, existence without recourse to decadent illusions. For Nietzsche, this redemption clearly involves a moment of reflective self-consciousness, in which the strivings of the will can be recognised as such: 'to turn every "It was" into a "Thus I wanted it to be!" – only that would mean redemption for me!'[ee] Nietzsche's reorienting of the operations of will towards an affirming consciousness is one respect in which his work represents not simply another example of speculative philosophy's material discontents, but rather an expression, in that material age, of a certain last-ditch Idealism. Yet because Nietzsche uncouples consciousness from any objective context of relation or horizon of experience – noticeably, in the case of eternal recurrence, from that acknowledgement of death in which, for Hegel, consciousness finds freedom – it floats loose from the possibilities of interpretation and conceptual interaction: the metaphors through which Zarathustra articulates his vision are always by way of being incomplete, attaching to no point of reality outside further metaphorical conjuncture which would allow them to signify.[38] Nietzschean redemption opens as surely to nothingness as the 'decadent' variations of Schopenhauer and Wagner, and the lofty solitude of Zarathustra is as inscrutable – and as fragile – as the equivalent stances in Feuerbach or Strauss.

Nietzsche's thought after *Zarathustra* turns to the historical workings of the will to power, and so to the operations underlying consciousness in which, for Strauss, religious ideas have their mythic origin. *On the Genealogy of Morals* (*Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 1887) dissects the processes by which ethical concepts come about. It examines the emergence and development of the 'ascetic ideal', or Christian morality.[39] In Nietzsche's narrative, this originated in a vengeful (and highly successful) revolt of the 'resentful' weak against the 'noble' values, rooted in spontaneity, instinct and vitality, of their masters, and was perpetuated by the cultivation of an insidious view of existence based on a life-denying relationship between 'good' and 'evil': 'The slave revolt in morality begins when resentment itself becomes creative and gives birth to values.'[ff] Continuing a theme of the *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche presents the spread of bad conscience (guilt) as the extension of

ee. 'Alles "Es war" umzuschaffen in ein "So wollte ich es!" – das hiesse mir erst Erlösung!' KG, VI, 1, 175.

ff. 'Der Sklavenaufstand in der Moral beginnt damit, dass das Ressentiment selbst schöpferisch wird und Werthe gebiert.' KG, VI, 2, 284.

an economic principle – the relation of creditor and debtor (KG, VI, 2, 314) – so 'revolt' is subliminally associated with a betrayal inflicted by commerce. This original inversion of value, such that strength and nobility become evil, is the point from which Nietzsche's genealogy departs, but its status is highly ambiguous. For genealogical analysis, by which developments and lineages are traced through time, requires that we 'regard the slave revolt in morality as an event in human history, and hence regard the reign of master morality as itself a historical episode'.[40] But such are Nietzsche's descriptions of master morality and slave revolt that historical definition is impossible: the former is evoked as natural, impulsive and lacking any internal dividedness – in other words, as prelapsarian – the latter as a fall from this state of grace brought about by the conspiratorial machinations of a 'priestly' caste.[41] These terms overlay completely the claim of analytical dissection with emblematic imagery and schematic contrast, with the result that the phenomena they name are detached from the possibility of historical examination (rather as the language of *Zarathustra* is detached from objective reference). The alleged historical grounding, which makes the emergence of asceticism coterminous with that of Pauline Christianity, itself simply perpetuates this autonomous rhetoric of conflicting types (and Nietzsche's vision of pre-ascetic morality is arguably at odds with any conceivable notion of human social life).[42] Nietzsche's account, then – contrary to its pretension to be historical – is mythic. Its genealogical method rests on premises which are not genealogically investigable, and the development it purports to analyze – will to power's fissiparous evolution – is actually the unfolding of (Nietzsche's) pre-analytical fantasy, or the narrative determination of historical being by what the literary discourse of myth from Hebbel to Wagner postulates as pre-history. In his late work *The Antichrist* (*Der Antichrist*), written the following year and published in 1895, the post-Hegelian problematic originating with Strauss comes full circle and Nietzsche offers his own *Life of Jesus*.[43] *The Antichrist* is his most inveterate attack on asceticism, but it is predicated on an implicit approximation of perspective between Nietzsche and the pre-Pauline, pre-ecclesial Jesus. The two meet, as it were, at the limits (before and after) of Christian history.

How, after Nietzsche and in the last decade of the nineteenth century, is Idealism most significantly apparent in German literature? The answer does not come from drama, which in the age of Naturalism directed its determinist energies, present since Hebbel, towards a type of material social critique not primarily indebted to the existential Schopenhauerian vein (the latter was to

re-emerge as a dramatic force much later, and outside Germany, for example in the plays of Beckett). The legacy is more clearly present in the novel, or rather in one particular novel, begun, two years after the publication of *The Antichrist*, in 1897. Writing in retrospect about the gestation of *Buddenbrooks* (1901), Thomas Mann noted:

> I remember well that what was originally important to me were the figure and experiences of the sensitive latecomer Hanno . . . But since an epic instinct drove me to begin *ab ovo* and to take up the whole prehistory as well, there emerged, instead of a novella about boyhood . . . a social novel disguised as a family saga . . . a cultural portrait overshadowed by the idea of decline.[gg]

The 'prehistory', or genealogy, which Mann describes is one of 'decline' – 'the solidity of lives held together by multiple and interlocking networks of value and significance' becoming eroded through inwardness and self-division.[44] It bears the imprint, simultaneously, of Schopenhauer's view that the unitary essence is turned against itself by the 'fatal gifts of reflection and introspection', and of Nietzsche's critical modification to that view which stipulated that no escape from suffering may be found in the areas which, increasingly, preoccupy Mann's characters: ethical concern, philosophical speculation (including the account of death in *The World as Will and Representation*: I, 655), and art (especially music).[45] As *Buddenbrooks* develops, the social world in which the characters find themselves is, as it were, backlit so as to undergo an aspectual change, shifting from medium of subjective interrelation and communal significance to manifesting a collection of shared symptoms. These networks still join lives together, but in a process of (material – meaning both hereditary and economic) decay, or the various futile strivings of a decadent will to power.

This perspective is itself not necessarily final, though, and is in subtle tension with the realist mode that makes it possible. Like Büchner's *Lenz*, to which it is surprisingly but significantly connected (as the other major nineteenth-century German prose narrative explicitly engaging with the legacy of Idealism), *Buddenbrooks* produces a fine balance of sympathy and distance in presenting the characters' inner lives as their identification with

gg. 'Ich erinnere mich wohl, daß, was mir ursprünglich am Herzen gelegen hatte, nur die Gestalt und die Erfahrungen des sensitiven Spätlings Hanno waren . . . Da aber ein epischer Instinkt mich trieb, ab ovo zu beginnen und die gesamte Vorgeschichte mit aufzunehmen, so entstand statt der Knabennovelle . . . ein als Familien-Saga verkleideter Gesellschaftsroman . . . ein vom Verfallsgedanken überschattetes Kulturgemälde.' Thomas Mann, *Gesammelte Werke*, 12 vols. (Berlin: Fischer, 1960), XI, 554 (henceforth quoted by volume and page number).

the outside world first begins to slip – in the attitude of Thomas Buddenbrook to the symbols of social and commercial success (I, 431) – and then dissolves completely (in Hanno's relationship to family and school). In revealing these developments, the narrative mode changes too, becoming more inward – it inclines towards free indirect speech and evoking troubled states of mind.[46] The novel moves with the symbolic self-understanding of its characters. But it never detaches this understanding from an objective and realistically represented world. However much the characters retreat from their externally embodied identities, the novel does not withdraw those coordinates from them (even when, as the account of Hanno's school demonstrates, they are unquestionably oppressive). And because Mann's commitment is historical and realist, there remains something in excess – both of the characters' subjective identifications and adopted sensibilities, and of the particular content of the objective world from which they feel alienated. (By contrast, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* permits nothing in excess of the world it articulates.) What remains in excess is the capacity of that historically particular world, and those characters' lives (poised however ambivalently within it), to be recognised as in continuity with the world to which Thomas Mann's language represents it: the historically particular, perhaps equally alienating, world of those who encounter *Buddenbrooks*. Such openness, to the being of others which the text cannot demarcate, is itself a becoming other (related to the 'Anderssein' which Hegel says is entailed by the moment of representation), and it resists the unifying pull of enclosure in a genealogical spectrum of activity or will. In this other light, which the novel in fact maintains with equal consistency, the characters' strivings are not simply the expression of pre-conscious conditioning forces. They can, rather, be seen as meaningful, though restricted, efforts to respond to historical experience, in the limited terms which this historical experience makes available, and as such they are touched with the dignity of a glimpsed and meaningful – even if unrealised – freedom. Hanno Buddenbrook's school day, beginning with scripture (religious representation: 'Vorstellung') and ending with art,[47] reflects, in microcosm, a reversal of Hegel's speculative relation which characterises not only Hebbel and Wagner, but also the Idealist legacy in philosophy from *The Life of Jesus* to *The Antichrist*. The work at whose conclusion the events of that day are related – and which is the culminating instance of that legacy in nineteenth-century German literature – absorbs fully the intellectual impetus which the reversal marks, while also pointing, on account of its fidelity to a realistic understanding of subjectivity in history, in the opposite direction. Moreover, with Mann's novel the possibilities and tensions afforded

by the inheritance of Idealism leave the nineteenth century, and enter the twentieth.

## Notes

1. 'Speculative' refers to the immanent, or historical, character of Hegel's thought as rooted in the dialectical self-realisation of Spirit ('Geist'). This renders it distinct from both the 'transcendental' Idealism of Kant and the subjective Idealism of Fichte.
2. Terry Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760–1860: the legacy of Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 217.
3. Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: the satisfactions of self-consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 162.
4. 'In Knechtsgestalt'; cf. Philippians 2.7: 'eussert sich selb und nam Knechts gestalt an'.
5. See Nicholas Boyle, 'An Idealist Faust? Goethe's Wager in the context of intellectual history', in William Collins Donahue and Scott Denham (eds.), *History and Literature: essays in honor of Karl S. Guthke* (Tübingen: Stauffenberg, 2000), 29–46, at 39; Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Johann Gottlieb Fichte's sämmtliche Werke*, ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte, 8 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1965 (Veit, 1845/6)), I, 432.
6. See Hans Ruppert (ed.), *Goethes Bibliothek: Katalog* (Weimar: Arion, 1958), 447.
7. See *Über Religion*, in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke: große Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, ed. Friedrich Beißner and Adolf Beck, 8 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1943–85), IV, 275–6, at 275. Further references to Hölderlin's works are to this edition.
8. See the discussion of *Faust* in Nicholas Boyle, *Sacred and Secular Scriptures: a Catholic approach to literature* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2004), 171–86, at 183–6.
9. On Büchner's incongruity with materialism, see John Reddick, *Georg Büchner: the shattered whole* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 37.
10. See *Ibid.*, 65.
11. See John Walker, 'Two realisms: German literature and philosophy 1830–1890', in Nicholas Saul (ed.), *Philosophy and German Literature 1700–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 102–49, at 102–3.
12. See *Ibid.*, 102.
13. On Büchner's use of examples here, see Paul Requadt, 'Zu Büchners Kunstanschauung', in *Bildlichkeit der Dichtung: Aufsätze zur deutschen Literatur vom 18. bis 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Fink, 1974), 106–38, at 108–9.
14. Walker, 'Two realisms', 106.
15. Hegel equates 'Vorstellung' with 'Anderssein': HW, III, 557.
16. John Edward Toews, *Hegelianism: the path toward dialectical humanism, 1805–1841* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 283. See David Friedrich Strauss, *Die christliche Glaubenslehre in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung und im Kampfe mit der modernen Wissenschaft*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Osiander, 1840), I, 68.
17. Toews, *Hegelianism*, 283.
18. David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet*, 2 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969 (first published Tübingen: Osiander, 1835)), II, 742.

19. See Wolfgang Braungart, 'Tod und Kunst, Geist und Bewusstsein: Zu Eduard Mörikes "Erinna an Sappho"', *Oxford German Studies* 36 (2007), 76–96, at 88.
20. See *Ibid.*
21. Friedrich Hebbel, *Werke*, ed. Gerhard Fricke, Werner Keller and Karl Pörnbacher, 3 vols. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), I, 306.
22. For a summary of Hebbel's intellectual encounter with Schopenhauer, see Francis Lamport, 'Three Schopenhauerian trilogies: Grillparzer, Wagner, Hebbel', *Oxford German Studies* 39 (2010), 54–69, at 69.
23. See George G. Windell, 'Hegel, Feuerbach, and Wagner's *Ring*', *Central European History* 9 (1976), 25–57, at 33.
24. George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: religion and aesthetic culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (University of Chicago Press, 2004), 191.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Strauss, *Leben Jesu*, I, 75.
27. Feuerbach, *Werke*, VI, 261.
28. Williamson, *Longing for Myth*, 196; Wagner, GSD, IV, 32–3.
29. Williamson, *Longing for Myth*, 197.
30. See Strauss' letter to Friedrich Theodor Vischer, 24 October 1844: David Friedrich Strauss, *Ausgewählte Briefe*, ed. Eduard Zeller (Bonn: Strauss, 1895), 162–3.
31. See Ritchie Robertson, *The 'Jewish Question' in German Literature 1749–1939: emancipation and its discontents* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 159–62.
32. Letter to August Röckel, 5 February 1855: 'Seine Philosophie, die vollständig den *Fichte-Schelling-Hegel*schen Unsinn und Charlatanismus über den Haufen wirft.' Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Briefe*, eds. Gertrud Strobel, Werner Wolf *et al.*, 18 vols. (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1979–2000; Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2000ff.), VI, 347.
33. See Williamson, *Longing for Myth*, 207.
34. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, 25 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972) (hereafter KG), III, 2, 161.
35. See *Ibid.*, III, 1, 383.
36. See Julian Young, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 12.
37. For example, in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (KG, IV, 2, 110) and later in *Götzendämmerung* (KG, VI, 3, 80).
38. See, for example, the 'allegory', presumably meant to show someone accepting the doctrine of eternal recurrence, in the section 'Vom Gesicht und Räthsel 2' (KG, VI, 1, 195–8).
39. On Nietzsche's concept of 'genealogy', see Raymond Geuss, 'Nietzsche and genealogy', in *Morality, Culture, and History: essays on German philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1–28 (especially 14).
40. Stephen Mulhall, *Philosophical Myths of the Fall* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 40.
41. See KG, VI, 2, 280–1.
42. See Mulhall, *Myths of the Fall*, 41.
43. See Heinrich Detering, *Der Antichrist und der Gekreuzigte: Friedrich Nietzsches letzte Texte* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2010), 25–37.

44. Martin Swales, 'Symbolic patterns or realistic plenty? Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* and the European novel', *Publications of the English Goethe Society* 60 (1989–90), 80–95, at 87. On the relationship between German Idealism and literary realism, see John Walker, *The Truth of Realism: a reassessment of the German novel 1830–1900* (Oxford: Legenda, 2011), 16–31.
45. Erich Heller, *The Ironic German: a study of Thomas Mann* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1958), 38. Heller's estimation of Schopenhauer's significance for the novel is criticised in T. J. Reed, *Thomas Mann: the uses of tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 48 and 81–3, though the criticism is based largely on the chronology of Mann's reading of Schopenhauer and on his own accounts of that reading (*Uses of Tradition*, 80–2), which are of limited consequence with regard to Heller's implication of a wider historical continuity.
46. See Swales, 'Symbolic patterns', 88.
47. Noted in Werner Frizen, 'Thomas Mann und das Christentum', in Helmut Koopmann (ed.), *Thomas-Mann-Handbuch*, 3rd edn (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2001), 307–26, at 310.

6

# Idealism in nineteenth-century British and American literature

Richard Eldridge

The topic of the presence of German Idealism in nineteenth-century British and American literature, or its influence on it, is both impossibly large and not readily tractable. One could begin to trace philologically either all or the most important direct engagements of major English-language literary writers with German texts. For example, Coleridge read Kant, Fichte and Schelling, notoriously including in *Biographia Literaria* without attribution several pages translated directly from Schelling's *Abhandlungen zur Erläuterung des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre*. George Eliot read and translated Feuerbach and David Strauss; Thomas Carlyle read and was substantially influenced by Fichte in developing his doctrine of the Everlasting Yea, but also by Goethe and especially by Hoffmann, Tieck and Jean Paul in developing the literary form of *Sartor Resartus*, with its peculiar quasi-existentialist resistance to systematicity. Given the mass of material and the variety of engagements, it would, however, be unprofitable, and quite likely impossible, to comb the archives for evidence of every direct textual engagement of a major English-language literary writer with a German Idealist source, at least as long as we lacked a general account of why these engagements took place and a way of arranging them into categories having to do with general themes and ideas that were taken up.

Hence, it will help at the beginning of what will nonetheless be a breathless survey of many cases to distinguish two different kinds of influence of German Idealism on English-language writers: immediate engagement by way of direct reading, including traceable borrowings of images, phrases, themes and so on; and indirect engagement, as English-language writers take up, develop, revise and criticise some of the thinking about human life that is both evident within some major German Idealist texts, but also more broadly circulating within the culture. Figuring out this latter, indirect

mode of engagement amounts to thinking of German Idealist philosophers as engaged with certain problems that are also widely felt throughout modern European culture – problems such as increasing secularisation, increasing commercialisation and increasing urbanisation, all with a consequent pluralisation of modes of life and a consequent sense of difficulty, but also of new possibility, in finding persistently satisfying orientation within actual or available modes of life activity. Like many philosophers, including the German Idealists in various ways, many literary writers respond to such problems, both taking up themes and motifs that are present in Idealist writing – sometimes in direct awareness of this fact, but sometimes not – and also developing distinctive stances of their own in relation to such problems, stances that are typically expressed less in systematic theories than in narratives of engagement with these problems. These narratives then typically do not record simple arrivals at solutions to these problems; instead, they describe partial solutions and partial failures, persisting uncertainties and the unavoidable presence of contingencies, even when a problem of life has been somehow addressed.

In a useful survey essay entitled 'The Present Situation in Philosophy', given as his inaugural lecture upon assuming the Professorship of Logic and Metaphysics at Edinburgh in 1919 and published in 1920, Norman Kemp Smith describes the broad stances of Idealism, naturalism and scepticism, and he undertakes to evaluate their respective virtues and vices. All three stances or styles stand, according to Kemp Smith, 'in a constant relation of interaction and mutual aid';[1] the virtues of scepticism, he argues, are its openness to diversity and its sense of human vulnerability. 'It is the enemy of fanaticism and of false sentiment in every form.'[2] But while 'valuable as a regulating balance-wheel, [scepticism] can supply no engine power'.[3] It is parasitic, destructive and spectatorial. The sceptic is 'a specialist in the subject of error, and when the community's stock of error gives out, he is faced by the spectre of unemployment, condemned to idleness until a new crop has been grown'.[4] Scepticism cannot answer to a genuine need for construction, that is, for the articulation of values – cognitive, epistemic, moral, social, political, cultural, artistic, religious and so on as may be – a grasp of which might enable orientation, guide us in practice and sustain us in a sense of the worth of what we do.

In contrast, naturalism is constructive, but in a spirit that is 'relative and empiricist'.[5] It endorses the great modern achievements of science and medicine, and it defends the existence of genuine scientific knowledge, without worrying much about either sense-data or the older epistemological

standpoint that seemed to lead to Humean scepticism. Yet naturalism is unable to characterise and defend the success of science in anything other than pragmatic and circular terms. We see that it works because we see that it works. It tends to enforce a strong fact/value distinction,[6] hence, undermining any effort to explain why any activity or set of commitments is really valuable in favour of noting that it is just a matter of fact that under certain conditions certain people do certain things. As Kemp Smith puts it, only parts and episodes are of interest to naturalism,[7] not achievements in the articulation and embodiment of values.

And so Kemp Smith himself argues for Idealism. Only it can even begin to show how 'the objective claims of aesthetics and morals . . . possess some kind of absoluteness'.[8] 'Progress in human thought'[9] does take place, both in representing and explaining how material phenomena are and in articulating and embodying values. Even if the project of developing a complete theory of human culture and of commitments to and in practices cannot be completed, it is reasonable to suppose that the histories of art, religion, morality and politics, along with the history, too, of scientific inquiry, show human beings becoming clearer in various ways about what it is worthwhile for them to do. Constructively, we should follow Idealist philosophers and reflect on these various histories, in the hope of articulating yet more clearly and fruitfully what is going on in the courses of achievement of value that they display.

This is an attractive suggestion, and it helps to explain why even with the rise of naturalism, Idealist thinking retains some attractions for many. (One might think of a great deal of post-Hegelian European philosophy as devoted to the investigation of human reality and to the articulation of values the effective pursuit of which is latent within it, yet dropping any claims about the closure or completability of this project, hence leaving room for continuing criticism, improvisation, risk and just plain luck.) Yet we live within a more pragmatic, naturalist and even sceptical climate than was the case in 1919, where in fact positivism was already being developed. It is harder for us than it was for Kemp Smith – and harder for the good reason that we are aware of so many more contingencies, pluralised modes of life and so forth – to accept that there is inchoate but genuine progress in the histories of art, religion, morality and politics that is there to be deciphered and articulated, as opposed to large masses of somehow social-material happenstances.

But then what? My main argumentative suggestion is that some of the most important, major literary writing in English in the nineteenth century, and in fact well into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, takes up the problem of how in the Idealist spirit to discern and articulate

values that are inchoately present in human reality, but that literary writing's engagement with these problems is also infused with a sceptical–empiricist–anti-systematic spirit. Naturalism is not a view that is by itself suitable for understanding human life, at least not for generating interesting narratives about what happens or might happen. Casting human actions and engagements in practice as simple reactions to neurons or stimuli, or unalterably given desires, fails to see the complexities of the inheritance, identification, contestation, reflection, criticism and revision of both desires and values that are present within human cultural life. The tendencies towards expressivism and emotivism that naturalism supports provide just too implausible and ultimately useless a story about valuing activity for literary writers to take much interest in it. Nor will scepticism quite do by itself, for just the reasons that Kemp Smith gives. Standing aside and gazing spectatorially on diversity will not help us to articulate what might be of value to us or even what might be persistently tragic in human life, as opposed to merely unfortunate or pathetic.

But if human actions and the attempts to instantiate values that they express are neither to be reduced to immediate reactions to material givens nor gazed on spectatorially from outside, then how are they to be looked upon? A first step will be giving up the representationalist conceit that much seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophy inherited from Cartesianism. It is simply not possible to abstract from actual uses of representations within concrete worldly activity, in order instead to consider these representations as somehow present purely in mind, so as then to determine which of them are absolutely reliable and which are not. Instead, we are always already bound up in public claim-making activity, including the activity of making claims about what it is valuable or worthwhile to do (both in an immediate present and in longer courses of joint social life). Whatever reliability claims about values may have, it must show itself within concrete practice. It cannot be established solely internally. A representation existing solely in the medium of the mind, without concrete applications in already existing practice, is as good as a nothing. Hegel famously develops a trenchant criticism of this representationalist conceit in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*. 'A ruse is just what cognition [of whether any particular internal representation is in itself absolutely reliable] would be in such a case, since it would, with its manifold exertions, be giving itself the air of doing something quite different from creating a merely immediate and therefore effortless relationship'[a,10] to representations in actual use within practices. Any reliable sense of what it

a. 'Denn eine List wäre in diesem Falle das Erkennen, da es durch sein vielfaches Bemühen ganz etwas anderes zu treiben sich die Miene gibt, als nur die unmittelbare und somit mühelose

is genuinely worthwhile to do 'would surely laugh our little ruse to scorn';[b,11] commitments must show themselves to be valuable within concrete, worldly practice, or not at all. This rejection of the representationalist conceit, powerfully present in Hegel, is also figured, somewhat more indirectly, in both Kant and Fichte. Kant rejects, as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy usefully put it, any *mathesis* or self-presentation of the subject,[12] and living up to the demands of the Categorical Imperative is cast not as something that we know in detail concretely how to do – although certain obvious wrongs are clear and must be avoided – but rather as an infinite project of the articulation and development of a culture of reciprocal respect, that is, of a kingdom of ends. Fichte argues somewhat similarly that any finite human subject with discursive consciousness must either have an intellectual intuition of freedom as a power to be exercised or a more inchoate sense of self-immiseration and of a lack of courage in failing to exercise it.[13] We are, for Fichte as for Kant and Hegel, more than simply reactive natural mechanisms. But deriving a detailed and specific doctrine of duties from this intuition or sense is an ongoing task, and Fichte – despite his efforts at systematic derivation – mostly ends up narrating his own repeated swerves into and falls back out of efforts at systematic theory, as he continually tries to develop a new system, coupled with a compelling introduction into how it makes its claims on us.[14] As a result, in Fichte too, however inadvertently, the travails of a worldly subject – Fichte himself – begin to be foregrounded over the development of any complete and systematic theory.

However it may be with Hegel, Kant and Fichte, the rejection of the representationalist conceit is a commonplace within major English-language literary writing of the nineteenth century. Early on in the *Prelude*, Wordsworth announces a mandatory turn away from representationalism and towards a sense of the always already existing embeddedness of the human subject and human thinking in open processes of the development of nature and culture.

> Hard task to analyse a soul in which,
> Not only general habits and desires,
> But each most obvious and particular thought –
> Not in a mystical or idle sense,
> But in the words of Reason deeply weighed –
> Has no beginning.[15]

Beziehung hervor zu bringen', G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft in Verbindung mit der Rheinisch-westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, *Gesammelte Werke*, 31 vols. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1980) (hereafter PhG), IX, 53–4.

b. 'So würde es wohl . . . dieser List spotten', *Ibid.*, 53.

Yet the rejection of the representationalist conceit does not imply any Humean or sceptical graceful submission to the follies and sways of either nature or material culture regarded as self-developing independent agencies. Wordsworth will continue to court what he calls in the title of his great poem, written in 1802 and published in 1807, 'Resolution and Independence'. The poem recounts the 'apt admonishment . . . to give me human strength'[16] that the poet finds in the words, or at least the bearing, of an itinerant leech-gatherer. Even a human being so immiserated and reduced in circumstances displays onwardness, persistence and agency, and so should we. That human beings possess powers of articulating and pursuing values and so of constructing a life is not a fact to be denied or scanted. As William Blake in his great epic *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion* (1804–20) has Los put it, 'I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Mans | I will not Reason and Compare: my business is to Create.'[17]

In order to get on with the work of creating a system that will at least tentatively sketch the terms of the fruitful exercise of human agency, but without adopting the representationalist conceit, the literary writer typically takes up what M. H. Abrams usefully calls 'the vatic stance'.[18] Adopting the vatic stance is a matter of looking not within at self-enclosed representations, but a matter rather of attempting to discern what is going on over time, both in one's own life and in the development of a larger culture. The poet, as Wordsworth puts it in his 1800 Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, quoting Shakespeare's Hamlet, 'looks before and after'.[19] Avoiding all 'false refinement or arbitrary innovation',[20] the poet attempts by 'look[ing] steadily at [his] subject'[21] to get clear both about what is immanently going on and about how to feel about it, in the hope of overcoming melancholy and alienation, and of achieving increased felt confidence in one's involvements in courses of life. In relation to an initiating scene, incident, person, social phenomenon and so forth that is at first troubling, obscure or perplexing, Wordsworth undertakes to narrate 'What passed within me',[22] as he moves – partly in the course of immediate response, but equally powerfully via retrospection and linguistic formulation of his experience – out of perplexity and into clarity and confidence in the having of feelings and evaluational stances, in a way that is exemplary for humanity as such.[23] As Abrams puts it, Wordsworth undertakes rehearsal of the circumstances of his life 'in order that the design inherent in that life, which has become apparent only to his mature awareness, may stand revealed as a principle which was invisibly operative from the beginning'[24] in such a way that 'a culmination which is comprehended within life itself is both achieved and narrated'.[25] The purpose of this rehearsal is 'to justify the experience of loss and suffering in

terms of a purpose that is immanent in the mind's growth into maturity'.[26] John Keats similarly, but more darkly, sketches growth within human life in his Letter of February, March, April, May, 1819 in describing the world as a 'The vale of Soul-making',[27] and in his Letter of 3 May 1818 in describing how we may move in life as if in 'a large Mansion of Many Apartments' from 'the infant or thoughtless Chamber', to 'the Chamber of Maiden-Thought', to the conviction that 'the World is full of Misery and Heartbreak', where we feel 'the burden of the Mystery'[28] that can be addressed, if at all, only in and through writing.

Crucially, felt orientation and meaning in life are to be found, if they are to be found at all, 'in life's every-day appearances',[29] as Wordsworth puts it, no matter how initially unpropitious they may appear. We are

> called upon to exercise [our] skill,
> Not in Utopia – subterraneous fields,
> Or some secreted Island, Heaven knows where! –
> But in this very world which is the world
> Of all of us, the very place in which, in the end,
> We find our happiness or not at all.[30]

Here Wordsworth's thought and procedure are extraordinarily close to the almost exactly contemporary remarks in Hegel's *Phenomenology* that the dawning of a 'new existence, a new world and a new shape of Spirit'[c,31] might be both glimpsed and furthered by recollecting the process of alienation and its overcoming. 'The frivolity and boredom which unsettle the established order, the vague foreboding of something unknown, these are the heralds of approaching change. The gradual crumbling that left unaltered the face of the whole is cut short by a sunburst which, in one flash, illuminates the features of the new world'[d,32] of accomplished meaningfulness that is arising out of the ashes of the past, and out of the human energies and interests that have been immanent within it. If it is the case that the development of truth as both the achievement and the reflection of grasp of fulfilled living is immanent within and open to completion within the historical process, then we can and 'must hold fast to the conviction that it is the nature of truth to prevail when its time has come, and that it appears only when this time has come, and therefore never appears prematurely, nor finds a public not ripe

c. 'Das neue Daseyn, eine neue Welt und Geistesgestalt', Hegel, PhG, 433.

d. 'Der Leichtsinn wie die Langeweile, die im Bestehenden einreissen, die unbestimmte Ahnung eines Unbekannten sind Vorboten, daß etwas Anderes im Anzuge ist. Diß allmählige Zerbrökeln, das die Physiognomie des Ganzen nicht veränderte, wird durch den Aufgang unterbrochen, der ein Blitz in einemmahle das Gebilde der neuen Welt hinstellt.' Hegel, PhG, 15.

to receive it'.[e,33] What remains to be done is to describe and make explicit what we are already bound up with, within the frame of ordinary life, as it is moving into the condition of affording us standing conditions of fulfilment and of meaningful, endorsable life.

Yet there is also a textually slight but momentous point of divergence between Hegel and Wordsworth. Recall that Wordsworth's lines about finding fulfilment within this very world end with the thought that there we find our happiness 'or not at all'. This last, concessive, self-doubting 'or not at all' makes all the difference. Hegel displays apparent confidence that he can fully and adequately describe the emergence in and through us of a fully satisfying new world, a fully satisfying shape of spirit. (Or can one hear an undercurrent of anxiety about his own ability to do this in Hegel's phrases 'we must hold fast to the conviction' ['Wir müssen überzeugt seyn'] and 'never appears prematurely, nor finds a public not ripe to receive it' ['nie zu früh erscheint, noch ein unreifes Publikum findet']? The modal verb and the double negative construction are at the very least curious, and in the *Aesthetics* Hegel is yet more ready to acknowledge continuing failures of felt meaningfulness in life, failures not remedied by institutional arrangements, and failures spoken to, but not resolved, by works of modern art.) In the case of Wordsworth, in contrast, moments of apparent supreme confidence in his own exemplary accomplishment of meaningful life are immediately succeeded and qualified by hesitations, doubts and uncertainties that motivate relapses into renewed rehearsals of not yet fully clear courses of development. In 'Tintern Abbey', Wordsworth's metaphysical paean to 'nature and the language of the sense' as 'The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, | The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul | Of all my moral being',[34] is immediately followed by the thought, beginning within the very same line 'Nor perchance, | If I were not thus taught . . . ',[35] as if to say there is more than insignificant room for doubt about this.[36] In the *Prelude*, Wordsworth offers his readers the apparently concluding thought that minds who have followed his own rehearsals of progress and taken them to model their own 'are truly from the Deity, | For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss | That can be known is theirs – the consciousness | Of whom they are, habitually infused | Through every image and through every thought, | And all impressions.'[37] Yet despite this apparent conclusion, Wordsworth immediately reverts to the thoughts that there may be no one, not even he, who 'hath his whole life long | Preserved,

e. 'Wir müssen überzeugt seyn, daß das Wahre die Natur hat, durchzudringen, wenn seine Zeit gekommen, und daß es nur erscheint, wenn diese gekommen, und deßwegen nie zu früh erscheint noch unreifes Publicum findet', Hegel, PhG, 49.

enlarged, this freedom in himself' and that he finds himself still 'to roam, | A meditative, oft a suffering man'.[38] For Wordsworth, and for other major literary writers, there is, it seems, no truth in the emergence within ordinary human life of standing conditions of fulfilment and meaningfulness, at any rate, no truth that can simply be made explicit or announced without strong qualification and exposure to continuing doubts.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge shares Wordsworth's rejection of the representationalist conceit, worrying, like Wordsworth, that adoption of that conceit enforces alienation and the sort of vulgar, grasping, self-undoing economic competitiveness that he sees as exemplified in modern urban life. In a passage that parallels Hegel's discussion, in § 185 of *The Philosophy of Right*, of Civil Society as a sphere of 'contingent arbitrariness and subjective caprice [that] destroys [particularity in itself] and its substantial concept in the act of enjoyment',[f,39] Coleridge writes that when we are in the grip of the representationalist conceit and suffer its social effects, we become

An Anarchy of Spirits! Toy-bewitched,
Made blind by lusts, disinherited of soul,
No common centre Man, no common sire
Knoweth! A sordid solitary thing
Mid-countless brethren with a lonely heart
Through courts and cities the smooth savage roams
Feeling himself, his own low self the whole.[40]

In Book VII of the *Prelude*, Wordsworth similarly describes London as a scene of 'thickening hubbub',[41] and he exclaims about the St Bartholomew Fair in particular, 'What a hell | For eyes and ears! What anarchy and din | Barbarian and infernal – 'tis a dream, Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound!' that 'lays . . . | The whole creative powers of man asleep!'[42] For Coleridge, the cure for this condition of alienation and anarchy, if there is a cure, arises when one comes 'by sacred sympathy [to] make | The whole one Self! Self, that no alien knows! Self, far diffused as Fancy's wing can travel! Self, spreading still! Oblivious of its own, | Yet of all possessing'.[43] Or as Coleridge puts in a later theoretical tract, 'the groundwork, therefore, of all true philosophy is . . . that intuition of things which arises when we possess

f. 'Die Besonderheit für sich . . . als . . . Befriedigung . . . zufälliger Willkühr und subjectiven Beliebens . . . zerstört in ihren Genüssen sich selbst und ihren substantiellen Begriff', Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*, eds. Laus Grotsch and Elisabeth Weisser-Lohmann, GW, XIV, 1 (2010), § 185, 161.

ourselves, as one with the whole'.[44] But how is such an intuition to be arrived at, when one rejects the representationalist conceit and acknowledges being always already caught up within chaotic life on the ground? Somewhat like Fichte, Coleridge spent much of the rest of his career, to the detriment of his poetry, attempting repeatedly and fruitlessly to theorise about the human subject in nature, in order to explain systematically the availability of such an intuition of self as one with the whole. Where Blake prophetically declaims allegorical systems, Wordsworth rehearses his own progress in the hope of confirming it and establishing its exemplarity, while yet remaining haunted by doubt, and Coleridge theorises, Shelley apotheosises love and embraces an abstract Platonism of emanations,[45] Keats distracts himself with aestheticism, and Byron wavers between Prometheanism and irony. In each case, the effort is to sketch some overcoming of alienation and social anarchy in favour of felt confidence in courses of life and the achievement of orientation in activity, but in a somewhat indirect, not immediately political-theoretical way.

Jane Austen finds a way out of the impasses of both uncertain theorising and the all too tentative rehearsal of individual progress by developing the marriage plot, hence abandoning the individual as the sole focus of narrative rehearsal. In her most accomplished novel, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Austen sets the mutually mercenary marriage of Charlotte Lucas and Mr Collins and the sexually impulsive, but then subsequently foundering marriages of Mr and Mrs Bennett and of Lydia and Wickham in counterpoint with the courtship and impending marriage of Darcy and Elizabeth, who achieve, in contrast, a just and reasonable attachment, where erotic attraction, humour and conversational intimacy are all intermixed. (On the topic of erotic attraction, it is worth noting how often Darcy stammers and Elizabeth blushes when they are in one another's company.) There is no metaphysical rhapsodising about the joys of isolate individual experience, either of one's own creativity or of nature's beauties. There is no political theory of the contours of a good enough political order here and no account of its conditions of achievement. Happiness is achieved pairwise or not at all, and it is, moreover, shadowed by the problems of maintaining it within future wedded life and of the intrusions into that life of not only difficult relatives, but also the inevitable effects of broader socioeconomic and political inequalities and miseries in the surrounding culture. Towards the end of the novel, Austen cuts away from dialogue and describes in the third person, using her own cool voice, Elizabeth's acceptance of Darcy's proposal:

> Elizabeth feeling all the more than common awkwardness and anxiety of his situation, now forced herself to speak; and immediately, though not very fluently, gave him to understand, that her sentiments had undergone so material a change, since the period [of her former rejection of him] to which he alluded, as to make her receive with gratitude and pleasure, his present assurances. The happiness which this reply produced, was such as he had probably never felt before; and he expressed himself on the occasion as sensibly and warmly as a man violently in love can be supposed to do.[46]

One can hear a certain irony in this passage – Darcy had 'probably' never felt such happiness before, and his sensible and warm expression of his violent love is presented as somewhat scripted, even clichéd. (How sensibly and warmly *is* a man violently in love supposed to express himself?) The novel ends with a brief review of the characters other than Elizabeth and Darcy, as Austen takes pains to remind us that Mrs Bennett is still silly, that Mary still moralises unattractively, and that Lydia and Wickham have an insufficient income, remain 'extravagant in their wants and heedless of the future', and retain 'all the claims to reputation which [their] marriage had given [them]'[47] – that is to say, none. There is no fantasising about either perfect individual bliss or the achievement of a social utopia; the achievement of happiness on the part of Elizabeth and Darcy is carefully qualified. But it is nonetheless a genuine happiness, and Austen's narration of it represents a supreme literary address to the problems of alienation and social chaos that shape the development of German Idealism.[48]

George Eliot takes up the Austenian marriage plot in *Middlemarch* (1871/2), similarly setting in counterpoint the impulsive and less happy marriages of Lydgate and Rosamond, and of Dorothea and Casaubon, with the mixed cases of Fred Vincy and Mary Garth and Mr and Mrs Bulstrode, and with the happier final marriage of Dorothea and Will Ladislaw. Her ability to present the movements of village sympathies and aversions, set against the background of developments in larger forms of practice (the passing of the 1832 Reform Act; the development of English Methodism; issues about professionalism in the prescribing and sale of medicines, and so on) is arguably peerless. She displays an all-sided human sympathy for her characters, a sympathy that is encouraged, perhaps, by her reading and translation of Feuerbach, with his attention to contemporary anthropological facts of feeling. As Philip M. Weinstein puts it, she displays 'unstinted sympathy and unbiased judgment, [with] life grasped momentarily and in the larger view, inwardly and outwardly'.[49] Yet she has difficulties in her major novels in

presenting a compelling picture of the achievement of adult happiness, stable orientation, and felt confidence in relationships and activities. Officially *Middlemarch* ends with Dorothea and Will Ladislaw now happily married, with Will having been elected to Parliament. Yet Dorothea is confined to the domestic sphere, and some readers have found in the description of the sunny, blond-curled Will Ladislaw and of Dorothea's somewhat maternal relation to him reason to regret that Dorothea did not end up both making a public life of her own and matched with the darker, more intense Lydgate. *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) ends with Maggie and Tom being swept away in a flood and so out of historical time, unable to manage the investment of their sympathies and intensities in village life as it had surrounded them. When Eliot produces a more clearly happy ending, as in *Silas Marner* (1861), the effect can seem melodramatic and sentimental, as Silas is converted away from miserliness and a sterile form of Calvinism and into sympathy for humanity by the love of a golden-haired child. Eliot's own complex sympathies and insight often seem strongest when directed at a wide range of minor characters, who reach more qualified and often mutually contradictory ends without any clear overarching story of triumph.

In a similar way, Charles Dickens offers plots that trace the achievement of stable identity and felt meaning in social life, paradigmatically in the figures of marriage, inheritance and adult work, but that also covertly express deeper tensions that remain unresolved. With, as Weinstein puts it, an imagination that 'is simultaneously Christian and Freudian', Dickens frequently produces 'a palimpsest that expresses both a mid-Victorian ideal and the gathering forces that ideal was meant to keep at bay'.[50] Officially, the values of selfless altruism, maturity and a disciplined heart win out over fitful passion and errancy. But, as in Eliot, a happy resolution is often imposed, while forces capable of undoing it are simultaneously registered and repressed. In *David Copperfield* (1850), for example, 'recalcitrant reality . . . is evaded, first by the fantasy of a child-wife [Dora] perfected in death and, second, by the culturally shared platitude of an all-reconciling housekeeper[-wife], Agnes'.[51] When David insistently presses his own feelings on Agnes, he concludes by saying, in words that his fervour belies, 'There is no alloy of self in what I feel for you.'[52] Or a desire that, in 1850, dare not speak its name and that binds together David and James Steerforth is simultaneously registered and suppressed. '"You belong to my bedroom, I find",' the 'very good-looking' Steerforth tells David, leading David to wonder 'if that were all right which I had a secret misgiving was nearly all wrong' (95, 96).[53] A nocturnal world of passion, imagination and sensuous responsiveness is supposed to be integrated into

a daylight world of marriage, family, civil society and the state, and yet this integration is never quite wholly achieved in a believable way.

Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1836) – the biography of the German philosopher-pilgrim Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, compiled by an anonymous editor and incorporating Teufelsdröckh's own autobiography and philosophy of clothes – moves explicitly in the orbit of German thought, with extensive references to and borrowings from Goethe, Schiller, Tieck, Jean Paul, Kant and Fichte. Teufelsdröckh's own ontology is markedly Idealist.

> Of Man's Activity and Attainment the chief results are aeriform, mystic, and preserved in Tradition only; such are his Forms of Government, with the Authority they rest on; his Customs, or Fashions both of Cloth-Habits and of Soul-Habits; much more his collective stock of Handicrafts, the whole Faculty he has acquired of manipulating Nature: all these things, as indispensable and priceless as they are, cannot in any way be fixed under lock and key, but must flit, spirit-like, on impalpable vehicles from Father to Son; if you demand sight of them, they are nowhere to be met with . . . So spiritual (*geistig*) is our whole daily Life: all that we do springs out of Mystery, Spirit, invisible Force; only like a little Cloud-image, or Armida's Palace, air-built, does the Actual body itself forth from the great mystic Deep.[54]

As is typical in the literary turn, however, Teufelsdröckh's itinerary towards the acceptance of this ontology and his attempts to live according to it are of more interest than its straightforward assertion. Having initially committed himself to 'the spirit of Inquiry', he then finds around him, as the editor puts it, 'all a grim Desert, this once-fair world of his; wherein is heard only the howling of wild-beasts, or the shrieks of despairing, hate-filled men; and no Pillar of Cloud by day and no Pillar of Fire by night, any longer guides the Pilgrim'.[55] Or in Teufelsdröckh's own words, '"To me the Universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility: it was one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference to grind me limb from limb".'[56] Teufelsdröckh moves out of immersion in this condition of '"The Everlasting No (*das ewige Nein*)"' initially through an act of 'Baphometic Baptism', wherein 'the fire-baptised soul . . . feels its own Freedom'[57] in an act of defiance that is, surely, inspired by Novalis on *Selbstgefühl* and Fichte on intellectual intuition. But this initial move leads only to life in the '"CENTRE OF INDIFFERENCE"',[58] as it remains unclear how

this defiant assertion of freedom and a power of meaning-making is to be concretely lived. At this point, '"the first preliminary moral Act, Annihilation of Self (*Selbst-tödtung*)"'[59] takes place, opening the way to '"Fore-shadows, call them rather fore-splendours, of that Truth, and Beginning of Truths [that] fell mysteriously over my soul . . . like the mother's voice to her little child that strays bewildered, weeping, in unknown tumults; like soft streamings of celestial music to my too-exasperated heart".'[60] The truth that is here revealed is that of '"Renunciation (*Entsagen*)"'.[61] One must give up one's demands or lower one's expectations. When they are sufficiently reduced, then the tiniest fraction or moment of happiness will yield an infinite value. '"*The Fraction of Life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your Numerator as by lessening your Denominator*. Nay, unless my Algebra deceive me, *Unity* itself divided by *Zero* will give *Infinity*".'[62] Within this frame of mind, one may come to 'love God' and to live within '"the EVERLASTING YEA, wherein all contradiction is solved: wherein whoso walks and works, it is well with him".'[63] This '"Conversion"'accomplished, Teufelsdröckh finds that

> I too could now say to myself: Be no longer a Chaos, but a World, or even Worldkin. Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it, in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee: out with it then. Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called Today; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work.[64]

How compelling are this conversion and the mode of life that is urged as a result of it? The anonymous editor and biographer is haunted by a 'painful suspicion . . . grounded perhaps on trifles, yet confirmed almost into certainty by the more and more discernible humoristico-satirical tendency of Teufelsdröckh . . . [that] these Autobiographical Documents are partly a mystification! What if many a so-called fact were little better than a Fiction; if here we had no direct Camera-obscura Picture of the Professor's History; but only some more or less fantastic Adumbration.'[65] After all, the editor complains, Teufelsdröckh has not 'told [his] singular story in plain words', but rather in 'Nothing but innuendoes, figurative crotchets: a typical Shadow, fitfully wavering, prophetico-satiric, no clear logical Picture'.[66] Both in Teufelsdröckh's putative autobiography and in *Sartor Resartus* as a whole, wit, fantastic associative leaps, and flights of exuberant diction in the styles of Sterne and Jean Paul overwhelm any plausible psychological or

social theory. A will to life in accordance with meaningful ideals persists, but it remains caught within the framework of the comic.

Ralph Waldo Emerson visited Carlyle at his Scottish farm in Craigenputtock in 1833, during the period of the completion of *Sartor Resartus*, and he arranged for that book's first single-volume publication in 1836 by a Boston publisher. His work displays much of the same desperate hunger for ideals and for renovated life according to them that marks Carlyle's, but with more American optimism, yet fitfully shadowed by despair, rather than released in manic wit. Emerson's writing overall inherits and continues the rhetorical tradition that Sacvan Bercovich has usefully identified as the American Jeremiad, which joins 'an unswerving faith in the [Protestant] errand' into the new world and 'an unshakeable optimism' with 'the castigation of [present] iniquities'.[67] Already in 1630, John Winthrop took as his text for his lay sermon on the ship *Arabella* crossing the Atlantic *Deuteronomy* 30:5: 'And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.'[68] Like the writings of his Puritan forebears, the Emersonian essay is designed as 'a political sermon' or 'a state of the covenant address', intended 'to revitalize the errand'[69] by joining together present criticism with a call to return to the path. American exceptionalism is the thought that the realisation of God's purposes and the fulfilment of the covenant are to take place in a new world, free of the corruptions of Europe. This exceptionalist stance, running up against the developing industrial and commercial modes of life that surround it, lends to American writing in general, and to Emerson's in particular, its characteristic mood of hope haunted by despair. Emerson continually calls for the true American Scholar who does not yet exist, 'Man Thinking' who is characterised by 'self-trust', while he sees in fact around him only 'the bookworm' or, in a Schillerian figure, 'man metamorphosed into a thing, into many things', man 'subdivided and peddled out . . . spilled into drops' through the social division of labour.[70] 'I dedicate my book to the Spirit of America', Emerson wrote in his journal in 1822; 'I dedicate it to that living soul, which doth exist somewhere beyond the Fancy, to whom the Divinity hath assigned the care of this bright corner of the Universe',[71] and he professes that he is 'ready to die out of nature and be born again into this new yet unapproachable America I have found in the West'.[72] Despite his readiness to be reborn and the thought that free and meaningful life according to divine ordination is no thing of fancy, however, Emerson characteristically swerves into doubt and despair within a few lines or paragraphs of his heights of optimism. In 'Experience', in the next sentence after announcing

the existence of 'the Power which abides in no man and in no woman, but for a moment speaks from this one, and for another moment from that one', Emerson goes on to ask, 'But what help from these fineries or pedantries? What help from thought? Life is not dialectics . . . Culture with us . . . ends in headache.'[73] The essay opens with a question and answer that announce the difficulty rather than the availability of fruitful thought. 'Where do we find ourselves? In a series of which we do not know the extremes, and believe that it has none.'[74] Emerson's swerves into doubts and uncertainties are a strength of his writing more than a weakness, as they help to maintain the onwardness of his thought – his commitment to 'the unattained but attainable self'[75] – and to save him from succumbing to the worst blindnesses and excesses of American exceptionalism in its imperialist operations. But these swerves also effectively foreground Emerson's intellectual itinerancy and inability to develop concretely actualisable political ideals and programmes, perhaps even an inability quite wholly to believe in the course of his own life.

Henry David Thoreau takes up the Jeremiad rhetorical stance from Emerson and the broader New England context, but he modulates into a more bodily register of labour and agricultural life in nature. His criticism of the present is directed at thoughtlessness, aimless expenditures of energy, especially in commerce, and distracted fearfulness. 'The mass of men,' he writes in *Walden* (1854), 'lead lives of quiet desperation';[76] 'men labor under a mistake . . . as serfs of the soul; . . . by a seeming fate, commonly called necessity, they are employed, as it says in an old book, laying up treasures which moths and rust will corrupt and thieves break through and steal. It is a fool's life.'[77] Against the grain of this modern life of empty business, Thoreau takes to thought in order to discover for himself livable ideals and virtues. 'To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust';[78] 'I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.'[79] Yet in the end, as in Emerson, and despite his political hopes, Thoreau's writerliness in the text of *Walden* and the doubts that linger within in are foregrounded over his conclusions and achieved way of life. In a justly famous section on 'The Bean-Field', he comments elegiacally on his own writing, giving voice to a sense of time and work still unredeemed. (Thoreau lived at Walden Pond from 4 July 1845 until 6 September 1847; his essay 'Civil Disobedience' was published in 1849 and his *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* in 1849,

so that in this passage in *Walden*, published in 1854, he is reflecting on both those earlier works and on his way of life and writing at Walden.)

> but now another summer is gone, and another, and another, and I am obliged to say to you Reader, that the seeds which I planted, if indeed they w*ere* the seeds of those virtues [viz. 'sincerity, truth, simplicity, faith, innocence, and the like'] were wormeaten or had lost their vitality, and so did not come up.[80]

Freighted with political hope and political criticism, but remaining predominantly metaphorical, Thoreau's images of planting, labouring, reaping, and spending according to thought remain more critical and invitational than directly effective in entering into modern practice.

As if directly to correct and to overcome the writerliness and philosophical intellectualism of Emerson and Thoreau, and informed by his own experience as office boy, printer's apprentice, typesetter, nurse, newspaper publisher and clerk in the Bureau of Interior, among other occupations, Walt Whitman writes in *Leaves of Grass* (1855, 1881, 1889, 1891/2) with an unmatched antinomian exuberance and erotic energy in seeking to sketch in free verse the incarnation of ideals in worldly practice. Immediate energy of assertion trumps detached theorising. 'I too am not a bit tamed . . . I too am untranslatable, | I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world'.[81] Whitman characterises himself, sounder of this yawp, as 'Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs, a kosmos | Disorderly fleshy and sensual . . . eating drinking and | breeding, | No sentimentalist . . . no stander above men or women or | apart from them . . . no more modest than immodest'.[82] His proclamations of joy in activity that flows from energies alike of body and mind is founded more in intuition, feeling, attitude and the moment of writing than it is in theory and argument. 'Wisdom is not finally tested in the *schools*, | Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having it to one not having it . . . | Wisdom is of the soul, is not *susceptible* of proof, is its own proof, | Applies to all stages and objects and qualities and is content'.[83] The wisdom that Whitman offers – his version of ideals actualised in life – is a more or less pantheistic celebration of life in self and other. 'I CELEBRATE myself, | And what I assume you shall assume, | For every atom belonging to me as good as belongs to you';[84] 'In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own | face in the glass'.[85]

Herman Melville is the darkest and most tortured of the major American writers of the achievement of the ideal within the actual. He takes up the

Jeremiad trope of America as the new Israel, arguing in his own authorial voice in *White-Jacket* (1850) that

> we Americans are the peculiar, chosen people – the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world . . . God has predestinated, mankind expects, great things from our race; and great things we feel in our souls . . . Long enough have we been skeptics with regard to ourselves, and doubted whether indeed, the political Messiah had come. But he has come in *us*, if we would but give utterance to his promptings.[86]

Perhaps, however, because of the very explicitness of this statement, and perhaps, too, as a result of his own experiences as a seaman of the difficulty of sustaining even a tiny shipboard community, metaphorically proleptic of ideal community as such, of some thirty men, Melville is also aware of the dark side of this self-conception. The very effort to give utterance to these promptings – to speak *how* an ideal community may be achieved through the expunging of evil – may itself also be an index of vain, mad, narcissist power-seeking that is all too likely to result in imperial misadventures or other disasters. Ahab (*Moby Dick*, 1851) would rid the world of the incarnate maliciousness, as he sees it, of Moby Dick, yet Steerforth reminds him that the war between them is his doing, not the whale's – 'See! Moby Dick seeks thee not. It is thou, thou, that madly seekest him'[87] – and argues that it would be better to abandon this madness of pursuit and to return home with a decent cargo of whale oil already acquired. Melville is explicit that the quest for the whale is a 'great allegory',[88] presumably of the simultaneous necessity and mad violence of idealisation in relation to community. Ahab regards the whale as:

> That intangible malignity which has been from the beginning; to whose dominion even the modern Christians ascribe one-half of the worlds; which the ancient Ophites of the east reverenced in their statue devil; – Ahab did not fall down and worship it like them; but deliriously transferring its idea to the abhorred white whale, he pitted himself, all mutilated, against it. All that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby Dick. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race

> from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it.[89]

If the violent death of all but Ishmael, left to tell the tale, is what the bursting of that hot heart's shell on evil comes to, then how, if at all, can evil be confronted and community reformed? What, if anything, can writing do? It is perhaps no surprise, then, that in *Bartleby the Scrivener* (1853), written immediately in the wake of *Moby Dick*'s too slight reception, Bartleby, a copy-clerk – that is, a kind of writer – should take as his repeated slogan and policy 'I would prefer not to'.[90]

It is something of a commonplace that twentieth-century British and American literature abandoned the efforts at social realism and at the tracking of possibilities of the achievement of ideals within social space that were characteristic of much nineteenth-century literature. Compare the styles and subject matters of Eliot, Dickens, Trollope and Galsworthy with those of Joyce, Woolf and Conrad. As Virginia Woolf famously remarked in her 1924 essay 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown': 'On or about December 1910, human character changed.'[91] As a result of yet further increasing urbanisation, industrialisation, awareness of social diversity and also of mutual social opacity, the thought that one might as a literary writer attempt to tell the story, or at least a story that is *exemplary for the possibilities of humanity as such within social life*, of the overcoming of alienation and anxiety, and of the achievement of stable orientation and felt confidence in relationships and activities founders. The modernist literature that expresses this foundering displays a pronounced turn inward, towards plights of unsettled consciousness and away from social plotting.

Woolf's own *To the Lighthouse* (1927) is a central text of this modernist turn. A key contrast in the novel is between the characters of Mr and Mrs Ramsay, both as those characters are described and presented directly in actions and as they are recalled and assessed by the young painter, Lily Briscoe. Mr Ramsay is a recognisably Idealist philosopher, modelled on Woolf's own father Leslie Stephen, author of *The History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (1876) and *The Science of Ethics* (1882), as well as other works that defended utilitarianism and developed a doctrine of social vitality, in an effort to blend a Hegelian sense of progress with a more fully secular metaphysics. In the novel, Mr Ramsay is determined to grasp and articulate the plot that lies behind the development of everything, including the progressive development of human social life. If we could only articulate this plot – that is, only become clearer and more complete in characterising

what values really invite and sustain our allegiances in such a way as to promote freedom and social harmony, just as Kemp Smith argued is the standing project of Idealist philosophers – then we *could* achieve stable orientation and felt confidence in relationships and activities. Mr Ramsay, in attempting to grasp 'Subject and object and the nature of reality' so as to set out this plot, has 'a splendid mind', and he has got quite far, but then also not quite far enough:

> For if thought is like the keyboard of a piano, divided into so many notes, or like the alphabet is ranged in twenty-six letters all in order, then his splendid mind had no sort of difficulty in running over those letters one by one, firmly and accurately, until it had reached, say, the letter Q. He reached Q. Very few people in the whole of England ever reach Q . . . But after Q? What comes next? After Q there are a number of letters the last of which is scarcely visible to mortal eyes, but glimmers red in the distance. Z is only reached once by one man in a generation. Still, if he could reach R it would be something. Here at least was Q. He dug his heels in at Q. Q he was sure of. Q he could demonstrate. If Q then is Q–R–. Here he knocked his pipe out, with two or three resonant taps on the handle of the urn, and proceeded. 'Then R . . . ' He braced himself. He clenched himself . . . Qualities that would have saved a ship's company exposed on a broiling sea with six biscuits and a flask of water – endurance and justice, foresight, devotion, skill, came to his help. R is then – what is R? . . . He had not genius; he laid no claim to that: but he had, or might have had, the power to repeat every letter of the alphabet from A to Z accurately in order. Meanwhile, he stuck at Q. On, then, on to R . . . Feelings that would not have disgraced a leader who, now that the snow has begun to fall and the mountain top is covered in mist, knows that he must lay himself down and die before morning comes, stole upon him, paling the colour of his eyes, giving him, even in the two minutes of his turn on the terrace, the bleached look of withered old age. Yet he would not die lying down; he would find some crag of rock, and there, his eyes fixed on the storm, trying to the end to pierce the darkness, he would die standing. He would never reach R.[92]

This heroic, vain, self-centred, masculinist, doomed effort to tell the story of everything, so as to achieve and sustain stable orientation and felt confidence in relationships and activities, is contrasted to the patient, other-oriented, feminist attentions of Mrs Ramsay to those around her. Mrs Ramsay is able to set a table and manage the conversation at a dinner

party. Her attentions turn from her children to her various guests and to her husband, putting everyone at ease, or at least responding to every particular case – including the management of her husband – with sympathetic understanding. Her sympathetic attentiveness to particulars is, it seems, a feature of her character, without either any need for, or possibility of, support from a grander story about the development of everything. She acts as a decent, sympathetic human being ought to act. Lily Briscoe in the end inherits something of this stance, thus forming a genuine quasi-filial chain of sympathy that is contrasted to Mr Ramsay's more combative and less fruitful relations with his own philosophy students.

Here in one clear sense Virginia Woolf is putting paid to Idealism. The time for its grand projects of social decipherment and the articulation of commanding values is past. No theory can save us; the very effort at grand theory is a symptom of markedly masculinist egoism and a failure of humanity. In Kemp Smith's terms, perhaps we are left with only naturalism and scepticism as live possibilities.

And yet what of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* itself? *It* has a large narrative arc. It describes the virtues and vices of various characters, and it tracks these characters to their various fates. In its implied assessments of the characters of Mr and Mrs Ramsay, figured in the understanding of Lily Briscoe, it offers us a story about values that might command our allegiance and support a decently stable orientation and sense of felt confidence in relationships and activities. And so in this way, the activity and stance of Woolf herself, despite its different tonalities, turn out to be not quite altogether different from that of Mr Ramsay, in that she, too, has a large story to tell about values and social orientation. As this complex situation illustrates, it seems plausible to conclude that if Idealism is not quite with us in its classic form as a live option for systematic metaphysical and institutional theorising, neither modernist writers nor we their audiences are quite beyond it either.

## Notes

1. Norman Kemp Smith, 'The present situation in philosophy', *Philosophical Review* 29 (1920), 5.
2. *Ibid.*, 6.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, 12.
6. *Ibid.*, 18.
7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, 23.
9. *Ibid.*, 4.
10. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford University Press, 1979) (hereafter PS), § 73, 47.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Leser (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1988), 31.
13. See J. G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowledge*, trans. Peter Heath and John Lachs (Cambridge University Press, 1982), 36, 16; J. G. Fichte, *Johann Gottlieb Fichte's sämmtliche Werke*, ed. I. H. Fichte, 8 vols. (Berlin: Veit, 1845/6), reprinted as vols. I–VII, *Fichtes Werke*, 11 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), i, 461, I, 434.
14. See Richard Eldridge, *Leading a Human Life: Wittgenstein, Intentionality, and Romanticism* (University of Chicago Press, 1997), 68–70, for an analysis of the foregrounding of the authorial personae in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* in a movement of procession and epistrophe.
15. William Wordsworth, *Prelude: The Four Texts (1798, 1799, 1805, 1850)*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), 1805: ii, ll. 232–7; 86.
16. William Wordsworth, *Selected Poems and Prefaces*, ed. Jack Stillinger (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), l. 112, 169.
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18. M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: tradition and revolution in romantic literature* (New York, W. W. Norton, 1971), 13.
19. Wordsworth, 'Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*', in Wordsworth, *Selected Poems and Prefaces*, 456.
20. *Ibid.*, 447.
21. *Ibid.*, 450.
22. Wordsworth, *Prelude* (1805), III, l. 174, 112.
23. See Richard Eldridge, *Literature, Life, and Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 69–100, for a full analysis of the argument of Wordsworth's 'Preface'.
24. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 76.
25. *Ibid.*, 123.
26. *Ibid.*, 124.
27. John Keats, 'To George and Georgiana Keats', *The Major Works: including Endymion, the Odes and Selected Letters*, ed. Elizabeth Cook (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 473.
28. Keats, 'To J. H. Reynolds', in *Ibid.*, 397.
29. Wordsworth, *Prelude* (1805), XII, l. 369, 508.
30. *Ibid.* (1805), x, ll. 723–8, 442.
31. Hegel, PS, § 808, 492.
32. *Ibid.*, § 11, 7.
33. *Ibid.*, § 71, 44.
34. Wordsworth, 'Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey', in *Selected Poems and Prefaces*, ll. 108–11, 109.
35. *Ibid.*, ll. 111–12, 109.

36. See Eldridge, *Literature*, *Life*, *and Modernity*, 69–100 for an analysis of the structure of doubt and self-criticism in 'Tintern Abbey'.
37. Wordsworth, *Prelude* (1805), XIII, ll. 106–11, 516.
38. *Ibid.* (1805), XIII, ll. 120–1, 126, 516. See Richard Eldridge, *The Persistence of Romanticism* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 102–23 for an analysis of the conclusion of the *Prelude*.
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40. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Religious Musings', [1794] in Coleridge, *The Complete Poems*, ed. William Keach (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), ll. 143–52, 110–11.
41. Wordsworth, *Prelude* (1805), VII, l. 227, 262.
42. *Ibid.* (1805), VII, ll. 658–61, 652, 654, 288.
43. Coleridge, 'Religious Musings', in *The Complete Poems*, ll. 154–7, 111.
44. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Essay XI, On Method', in *The Friend* [1809] (Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2010), 344.
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50. *Ibid.*, 46, 44.
51. *Ibid.*, 37.
52. Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 737.
53. *Ibid.*, 95, 96.
54. Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, ed. Archibald MacMechan (Boston, MA: Ginn, 1897), 155–6.
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58. *Ibid.*, 169.
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*, 171.
61. *Ibid.*, 173–4.
62. *Ibid.*, 173.
63. *Ibid.*, 175.
64. *Ibid.*, 179.
65. *Ibid.*, 183.
66. *Ibid.*, 168.
67. Sacvan Bercovich, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 6, 7.

68. *The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*, eds. Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford University Press, 2008), 256.
69. Bercovich, *The American Jeremiad*, 5, 4, xiv.
70. Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'The American scholar', in Stephen E. Whicher (ed.), *Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1957), 73, 65, 64.
71. Ralph Waldo Emerson, 11 July 1822, in *The Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson: with annotations*, vol. 1, 1820–4, eds. Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2006), 160.
72. Emerson, 'Experience', in *Selections*, 267.
73. *Ibid.*, 261.
74. *Ibid.*, 254.
75. Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'History', in *Essays and Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte (New York: The Library of America, 1981), 239.
76. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: The Modern Library, 1992), 8.
77. *Ibid.*, 5.
78. *Ibid.*, 14.
79. *Ibid.*, 86.
80. *Ibid.*, 154–5.
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82. *Ibid.*, 50.
83. *Ibid.*, 300.
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85. *Ibid.*, 85.
86. Herman Melville, *Redburn*, *White-Jacket*, *Moby Dick*, ed. George Thomas Tanselle (New York: Library of America, 1983), 50.
87. Melville, *Moby Dick*, in *Ibid.*, 1402.
88. Herman Melville, 'Letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne, November 17, 1851', in *Correspondence*, ed. Lynn Horth (Evanston, IL:Northwestern University Press, 1993), 212.
89. Melville, *Moby Dick*, in *Redburn*, *White-Jacket*, *Moby Dick*, 989.
90. Herman Melville, 'Bartleby the Scrivener', in *Moby Dick and Other Writings*, ed. G. Thomas Tanselle (New York: Library of America, 2000), 649 and *passim*.
91. Virginia Woolf, *Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford University Press, 2008), 32.
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7

# Elements of Schopenhauer's thought in Beckett

Ulrich Pothast

It was observed early in the history of Beckett studies that Beckett's essay on Marcel Proust, which he wrote in Paris in 1930 at the age of 24, not only makes some affirmative references to Schopenhauer's thought, but can also be seen as an attempt to find central elements of Schopenhauer's pessimistic world view in Proust's *Recherche*.[1] However, for a long time critical interest in Beckett's philosophical roots centred primarily around other philosophers, most notably Descartes, but also Geulincx, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, and even Heidegger and Sartre. The long-lasting disregard for Schopenhauer is slightly surprising since, even by 1982, it could be demonstrated through word-by-word analysis that Beckett's essay on Proust not only makes use of Schopenhauer here and there, but is, in its entirety, an attempt to interpret Proust's *Recherche* in Schopenhauerian terms.[2] Moreover, Beckett tries in this essay to give an overall, if sketchy, account of artistic life and artistic activity in general on the basis of Schopenhauer's philosophy. There are numerous paraphrases of Schopenhauer's texts and even quite a few literal quotations, which Beckett drew from Schopenhauer without communicating the source to his reader. However, for a long time Beckett's essay on Proust could be dismissed as the work of a very young man, of not much significance for his further intellectual career. Thus, it came as quite a surprise for many scholars when James Knowlson's biography of 1996[3] quoted hitherto unknown letters by Beckett and referred to hitherto unpublished material from Beckett's notebooks, all of which did show that Beckett not only read Schopenhauer in his youth, but had a long-term interest in Schopenhauer and intermittently re-read that philosopher's works throughout his life. Moreover, from the late 1990s onwards some of Beckett's personal notebooks have become accessible to scholars in the Beckett Archive at Reading. We now know, for instance, that as late as 1979–81 Beckett re-studied Schopenhauer and

made a series of entries on the philosopher – sometimes consisting, in fact, of literal quotations. These entries refer not just to Schopenhauer's often-cited essays 'On the Vanity of Existence', 'On the Suffering of the World', 'On the Affirmation and Denial of the Will-to-Live', but also to some more obscure parts of *The World as Will and Representation*. Beckett in those years even underwent the intellectual labour of studying Schopenhauer's abstract and, apart from polemic outbreaks, dry doctoral dissertation *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, making notes as he went along.

Considering all this, it may not be entirely futile to attempt to look at Beckett's work and thinking from a Schopenhauerian standpoint. This is what I want to try very briefly in this chapter. I wish to emphasise from the outset that Beckett's literary work, despite an obvious Schopenhauerian background, is in no way a translation of Schopenhauerian ideas into works of art. Beckett's use of Schopenhauerian material, as of all other philosophical sources, was always entirely his own. He thus proves as independent and autonomous an artist as one could possibly wish.

I shall, to begin with, give a brief sketch of those basic traits of Schopenhauer's thought that I consider to be particularly relevant for the way Samuel Beckett uses and transforms Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory and his philosophy of human life (section I). Then, I shall highlight a few distinctly Schopenhauerian points in Beckett's essay on Proust, which represent central elements of the author's thinking about art and life at the time it was written (section II). To keep this chapter from being a matter of mere theory, I shall also give a brief reading of Beckett's play *Endgame*, looking at it from the standpoint of Schopenhauer's metaphysics and of Beckett's early adaptation of that metaphysics in the essay on Proust (section III). Finally, I shall try to summarise a few possible reasons for Schopenhauer's enormous success among artists from the nineteenth century up until today, focusing on traits that may have had a special appeal to artists whose work we tend to call 'modern' (IV).

## I.

The reader may remember Schopenhauer's way of describing human life, looking at it from the viewpoint of his metaphysics:

> The earth rolls from day into night; the individual dies; but the sun itself burns without intermission, an eternal noon. Life is certain to

> will-to-live; the form of life is the endless present; it matters not how individuals, the phenomena of the Idea, arise and pass away in time, like fleeting dreams.[a,4]

And in close proximity to those sentences:

> The present alone is that which always exists and stands firm and immovable. That which, empirically apprehended, is the most fleeting of all, manifests itself to the metaphysical glance that sees beyond the forms of empirical perception, as that which alone endures, as the *nunc stans* of the scholastics.[b,5]

These passages display at first the traditional difference that we find in all Idealist thinking; the difference between, on the one hand, a phenomenal world that exists only as the totality of appearances but does not exist independently of its being perceived, and, on the other hand, an independent thing or entity that underlies and gives basic structure to the totality of appearances that make up the phenomenal world. Schopenhauer's use of the word 'Idea' is, in the wider framework of German Idealism, unusual since he conceives of his 'Ideas' as Platonic forms, which constitute the structural essence of any item belonging to the phenomenal world. Hence, Schopenhauer states that the individuals, in that case all individual persons, are 'phenomena of the Idea'. There are some obvious differences between Plato's Ideas and Schopenhauer's, but that need not concern us here. Instead, an important peculiarity of Schopenhauer's metaphysical thinking must be stressed at this point: in his system there is still something 'deeper' or more fundamental than the Platonic forms or 'Ideas', namely, 'the will' or 'will-to-live'. This will is what Schopenhauer considers to be the ultimate ground of all reality and, by consequence, the ultimate ground of all phenomena and all life. Compared with this absolute reality, human persons are, in Schopenhauer's eyes, 'fleeting dreams' that come and go but have no genuine reality. There is also no genuine reality of space and time, as they are, according to Schopenhauer (following Kant), just forms of our empirical perception. Therefore, in the

a. 'Die Erde wälzt sich vom Tage in die Nacht; das Individuum stirbt: aber die Sonne selbst brennt ohne Unterlaß ewigen Mittag. Dem Willen zum Leben ist das Leben gewiß: die Form des Lebens ist Gegenwart ohne Ende; gleichviel wie die Individuen, Erscheinungen der Idee, in der Zeit entstehn und vergehn, flüchtigen Träumen zu vergleichen.' Arthur Schopenhauer, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Arthur Hübscher, 7 vols. (Mannheim: Brockhaus, 1988) (hereafter SpSW), II, 331.

b. 'Die Gegenwart allein ist Das, was immer da ist und unverrückbar feststeht. Empirisch aufgefasst das Flüchtigste von Allem, stellt sie dem metaphysischen Blick, der über die Formen der empirischen Anschauung hinwegsieht, sich als das allein Beharrende dar, das *Nunc stans* der Scholastiker.' *Ibid.*, II, 329.

passages just quoted, the true form of life is called 'an eternal noon' and an 'endless present', whereas we individual persons necessarily apprehend our present instant in time as a transitory moment – erroneously, as Schopenhauer claims. The absolute ground of the world, the will as thing-in-itself, the ultimate essence of all life, remains outside all time and exists, metaphorically speaking, in an endless present under an ever-shining sun of suffering and pain.

Schopenhauer's reasons for that ever-painful image of life and world become clearer when we remember how he describes the will as the ultimate ground of everything. He considers that will to be a blind, impersonal, unconscious, but permanent striving without end and without fulfilment. Consequently, the philosopher claims that the nature and fate of all life on Earth is virtually the same: striving without end and without any chance of durable fulfilment, an existence of deprivation, suffering and pain. There may be short moments of satisfaction, the very brief instances in time when our individual will, that is, the phenomenon of our will as individuals, gets what it wants. But immediately afterwards, Schopenhauer claims, either new striving for another objective sets in, that is, new suffering, or there is deadly boredom when we lack new objectives – which is a special kind of suffering as well.

For individual beings like ourselves as persons, there is still the treacherous perspective of individual death. This empirical perspective, however, provides only a very empty kind of hope. Schopenhauer's metaphysical point of view makes him see individual death as some kind of deceit, just as individual life. What instead goes on according to Schopenhauer's philosophy is, in a non-ending present, suffering, pain or otherwise boredom. To illustrate this, I quote another part of Schopenhauer's text which gives his description of all life on earth:

> Willing and striving are its whole essence, and can be fully compared to an unquenchable thirst. The basis of all willing, however, is need, lack, and hence pain, and by its very nature and origin it is therefore destined to pain. If, on the other hand, it lacks objects of willing, because it is at once deprived of them again by too easy a satisfaction, a fearful emptiness and boredom come over it; in other words, its being and its existence itself become an intolerable burden for it. Hence its life swings like a pendulum to and fro between pain and boredom, and these two are in fact its ultimate constituents.[c,6]

c. 'Wollen und Streben ist sein ganzes Wesen, einem unlöschbaren Durst gänzlich zu vergleichen. Die Basis alles Wollens aber ist Bedürftigkeit, Mangel, also Schmerz, dem er folglich schon

It is worth noting that the insight into all this, the insight into the true nature of human life as seen from a metaphysical point of view, according to Schopenhauer, is not the subject of the art form which traditionally centres on human fate and suffering, that is: tragedy. Traditional tragedy, in Schopenhauer's eyes, indeed shows the suffering and death of its heroes. But the metaphysical insight that this suffering is the ultimate nature of all life, that individual death is metaphysically meaningless, that a deeper kind of suffering goes on and on forever – this insight is not presented to the audience of traditional tragedy, but, at most, shines up very briefly and partially in the mind of a tragic hero at the moment when he or she relinquishes all individual aims and freely accepts death. Thus, Schopenhauer's theory of tragedy leaves a desideratum for the work of a dramatist, namely, to depict in the stage action the true nature of life as the philosopher describes it, the pendulum between pain and boredom, the ever-crushed hopes, the nature of individual life as a permanent deceit, as never-ending need, lack and hence pain. Any drama that could manage to give a hint as to the entire content of Schopenhauer's metaphysical vision would definitely show more pain, more emptiness and would, in the final analysis, be crueller than any work of traditional theatre.

Another important subject for Beckett was Schopenhauer's view of art and the preconditions of artistic creativity. In the Third Book of *The World as Will and Representation* which, usually, is termed Schopenhauer's 'aesthetics', the author gives an extensive account of a special kind of experience that enables the artist to bring forth a true work of art. This experience, according to Schopenhauer, consists in a deeply contemplative state where the mind is completely immersed in its object, so much so that there is no individual awareness any more, no awareness of any surrounding things or beings, and, most importantly, no impulse of the individual's will. Schopenhauerian contemplation is, above all, a will-less state of mind, only to be arrived at by the individual through forgetting about him- or herself completely. Schopenhauer even claims that in true will-less contemplation subject and object merge into each other; the normal empirical self disappears. Those rare moments of contemplative artistic vision come along more easily, Schopenhauer says, when there is a larger than usual degree of suffering. Suffering, according to Schopenhauer, is conducive to renouncing the aims

ursprünglich und durch sein Wesen anheimfällt. Fehlt es ihm hingegen an Objekten des Wollens, indem die zu leichte Befriedigung sie ihm sogleich wieder wegnimmt; so befällt ihn furchtbare Leere und Langeweile: d.h. sein Wesen und sein Daseyn selbst wird ihm zur unerträglichen Last. Sein Leben schwingt also, gleich einem Pendel, hin und her, zwischen dem Schmerz und der Langenweile, welche Beide in der That dessen letzte Bestandtheile sind.' *Ibid.*, II, 368.

of one's individual will and becoming a will-less subject, with a mind entirely immersed in its contemplated object. That object in those rare experiences has ceased to be part of the spatiotemporal world, and what is left is just the object's true eternal form, which Schopenhauer termed '*the Idea*' or the '*Platonic Idea*'. The Idea for Schopenhauer is free from the distortions, as he calls them, of time, space, causality and individual will, and in that sense is described as 'pure'. The artist in this contemplative state of mind has transcended the deceptive structures and relationships of everyday life, he or she has some kind of metaphysical experience, which, however, does not give the full essence of all life on earth as just described, but gives at least the extraspatial, extratemporal, pure form of some species of things or living beings.

Schopenhauer states that only music is able to transcend even the sphere of Platonic Ideas and come close to an audible rendering of what the metaphysical will itself, the ultimate ground of the world, might be like. Since the art of the painter, sculptor, poet and any other non-musical artist rests on the metaphysical experience of the Idea, and since the musical composer even gives us, as it were, some kind of translation of a yet deeper metaphysical reality, all art in Schopenhauer's view provides metaphysical knowledge, although in the language of art, not of philosophy or science. This was summed up by Friedrich Nietzsche who, in his first preface to *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*, claimed art to be 'the truly metaphysical activity of this life'[d].[7]

One may, as a person of the twenty-first century, be fairly sceptical or maybe even amused about all this. However, it is a fact that, from all those many aesthetic theories that emerged in the great age of modern Idealist philosophy between Kant and the latest latecomers to the Hegelian school, it is Schopenhauer's philosophy of art that had the greatest following, not among philosophers but among artists up to today. Possibly one of the most powerful factors in that matter was that Schopenhauer openly claimed an epistemic, more precisely a metaphysical, primacy of art over philosophy and over science. It seems to be this primacy that turned many artists into Schopenhauer partisans, at least for part of their lifetime, like, to name but a few, Richard Wagner, Leo Tolstoy, Thomas Hardy, August Strindberg, Maurice Maeterlinck, Guy de Maupassant, Joseph Conrad, Marcel Proust, André Gide, Thomas Mann, Robert Musil, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Jorge Luis Borges and, last but not least, Samuel Beckett.[8]

d. 'Der eigentlich metaphysischen Tätigkeit dieses Lebens', F. Nietzsche, *Werke in drei Bänden*, ed. K. Schlechta (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1965), i, 20.

II.

Looking now at Beckett's *Proust*, I shall just mention a few themes which Beckett's view of Proust's *Recherche* has in common with Schopenhauer's philosophy. Also, I shall mention some points at which Beckett does not side with Schopenhauer, but tends to transform the latter's theory so as to create something new of his own.

Beckett's (admittedly sketchy) draft of a philosophy of art contained in the essay on Proust shares, at first, some important basic traits with Schopenhauer's aesthetics. These traits make up structurally central elements of an approach to a theory of art that cannot be changed at will without far-reaching consequences. Those elements are: the firmly stated difference between phenomenal reality and true reality, the description of the phenomenal world as a projection of 'the will'; the assumption that time, space and causality constitute the basic, although deceptive, forms of empirical cognition for any human being; the definition of the true object of art as 'the Idea', the properties of which are not to be grasped by any kind of concept, but only by the contemplative, deeply immersed, will-less artistic vision; the assumption that subject and object merge into one single entity during such contemplation; the clearly articulated analogy with mystical experience. Furthermore, we find in Beckett's account of art the general opposition between everyday phenomenal knowledge which is thoroughly deceitful and, contrary to it, artistic knowledge of a deeper transphenomenal reality – such knowledge being indeed true and the basis of all artistic productivity. We also find that Beckett denounces time, space and causality as being the forms of everyday experience that keep any such experience within the narrow limits of a thoroughly distorting worldview organised along the lines of an individual's personal will.

In my view, those points would sufficiently confirm the assumption that Schopenhauer's philosophy and his view of art belong to the intellectual core of Beckett's *Proust.* There are, however, some points in Beckett's early essay where he talks about details instead of central conceptual elements in a philosophy of art. I take it that those details show even more clearly Beckett's tendency to use Schopenhauer's philosophy as a philosophical system to start with, as well as a system to be transformed for Beckett's own purposes in order to make it fit for twentieth-century works of art – instead of remaining in its original nineteenth-century form.

One quite typical adaptation concerns the description of life as a pendulum. Beckett writes:

> The pendulum oscillates between these two terms: Suffering – that opens a window on the real and is the main condition of the artistic experience, and Boredom – with its host of tophatted and hygienic ministers, Boredom that must be considered as the most tolerable because the most durable of human evils.[9]

By talking about 'Suffering – that opens a window on the real', Beckett obviously touches on Schopenhauer's doctrine that suffering is a suitable precondition for becoming indifferent to one's individual aims, fears, wishes, etc., for leaving them behind, that is, renouncing the aims of the individual will. This, according to Schopenhauer, can allow persons to sink into contemplation and mentally transcend the everyday forms of space, time and causality, with the effect that there is a mental setting in which a 'window on the real' opens up, that is, a window on the metaphysical vision of the Idea.

Another Schopenhauerian element that keeps recurring in Beckett's literary œuvre is the description of human life as a *pensum* to be worked off. The background to this is Schopenhauer's conviction that despite all seemingly senseless suffering that human individuals have to undergo, there is, however, in all this some superhuman, timeless kind of justice. All pain and suffering of individual life has a higher justification, according to Schopenhauer, in the idea that human persons are charged with some kind of original sin for which they have to atone. This is so, Schopenhauer claims, despite the fact that the individuals did not commit any original sinful deed themselves, this deed instead being the act of their very procreation. In his essay 'On the Vanity and Suffering of Life', Schopenhauer writes:

> Far from bearing the character of a *gift*, human existence has entirely the character of a contracted *debt*. The calling in of this debt appears in the shape of the urgent needs, tormenting desires, and endless misery brought about through that existence. As a rule, the whole lifetime is used for paying off this debt, yet in this way only the interest is cleared off. Repayment of the capital takes place through death. And when was this debt contracted? At the begetting.
>
> Accordingly, if man is regarded as a being whose existence is a punishment and an atonement, then he is already seen in a more correct light.[e,10]

e. 'Denn das menschliche Daseyn, weit entfernt den Charakter eines *Geschenks* zu tragen, hat ganz und gar den einer kontrahirten *Schuld*. Die Einforderung derselben erscheint in Gestalt der, durch jenes Daseyn gesetzten, dringenden Bedürfnisse, quälenden Wünsche und endlosen Noth. Auf Abzahlung dieser Schuld wird, in der Regel, die ganze Lebenszeit verwendet: doch

Due to the fact that Schopenhauer's German word 'Schuld' can mean both guilt and debt, English translations oscillate according to what may have been meant primarily in the sentence to be translated. However, as the quoted passage shows, Schopenhauer's meaning is guilt as well as debt at many points.

The consequences arising here for Schopenhauer, all of which can be found in Beckett's literary work, are threefold: since the debt is contracted at the begetting, it seems logical that the individual – albeit absurdly – repents having come into existence at all. Furthermore: since the guilt belongs to the world, Schopenhauer considers the world, and not some kind of beyond, to be the place where expiation has to take place. He continues shortly after the passage just cited:

> Every great pain, whether bodily or mental, states what we deserve; for it could not come to us if we did not deserve it . . . An outcry has been raised about the melancholy and cheerless nature of my philosophy; but this is to be found merely in the fact that, instead of inventing a future hell as the equivalent of sin, I have shown that where guilt is to be found, there is already in the world something akin to hell; but he who is inclined to deny this can easily experience it.[f,11]

Schopenhauer's third consequence from this is that personal life has to be seen as a place of forced labour where a well-defined set of penitentiary work has to be carried out. Schopenhauer writes: 'Life is a pensum to be worked off; in this sense *defunctus* is a fine expression.'[g,12] Beckett, in the essay on Proust, calls the ultimate ground of all personal life 'the "invisible reality" that damns the life of the body on earth as a pensum and reveals the meaning of the word: "defunctus".'[13] The Latin word *defunctus*, normally used for 'dead', can be taken to mean literally 'one who has completely finished' (a labour), 'one who has completely worked it off'.

sind damit erst die Zinsen getilgt. Die Kapitalabzahlung geschieht durch den Tod. – Und wann wurde diese Schuld kontrahirt? – Bei der Zeugung.

Wenn man demgemäß den Menschen ansieht als ein Wesen, dessen Daseyn eine Strafe und Buße ist; – so erblickt man ihn in einem schon richtigeren Lichte.' SpSW, 665f.

f. 'Jeder große Schmerz, sei er leiblich oder geistig, sagt aus, was wir verdienen: denn er könnte nicht an uns kommen, wenn wir ihn nicht verdienten . . . Man hat geschrien über das Melancholische und Trostlose meiner Philosophie: es liegt jedoch bloß darin, dass ich, statt als Aequivalent der Sünden eine künftige Hölle zu fabeln, nachwies, dass wo die Schuld liegt, in der Welt, auch schon etwas Höllenartiges sei: wer aber dieses leugnen wollte, – kann es leicht ein Mal erfahren.' *Ibid.*, III, 666.

g. 'Das Leben ist ein Pensum zum Abarbeiten: in diesem Sinne ist *defunctus* ein schöner Ausdruck.' *Ibid.*, VI, 318.

Beckett not just literally approves of Schopenhauer's calling personal life a *pensum* and this earth a penitentiary, he also literally sides with Schopenhauer's denunciation of any kind of contact between human persons, especially love and friendship. Schopenhauer's theory at this point relies on the irrevocable individualisation of living beings in time and space, which results in persistently opposed individual aims and interests. Beckett especially concentrates on time when giving reasons for claiming that there is no genuine, non-illusory contact between human persons. He thoroughly ridicules some of the most treasured forms and aims of human social life as being based on a profound kind of deceit: love he declares to be a 'desert of loneliness and recrimination'.[14] Friendship, which one might think could be achieved more easily among human beings, becomes, in Beckett's text, the very pinnacle of preposterous self-deception: 'Friendship implies an almost piteous acceptance of face values. Friendship is a social expedient, like upholstery or the distribution of garbage buckets. It has no spiritual significance.'[15]

In the face of so many parallels between Beckett's *Proust* and Schopenhauer's philosophy, it has usually been overlooked that there are also points at which Beckett, even in that early work, does not stick to Schopenhauer's theory, but takes his own philosophical path in transforming Schopenhauerian elements. The most important aspect here is Beckett's handling of Schopenhauer's term 'Idea'. Beckett does, indeed, emphasise several times that 'the Idea' is the true object of art. But, unlike Schopenhauer, he does not at all identify this 'Idea' with what Plato meant by that word. He drops Schopenhauer's Platonism altogether and thereby drops one of the most traditional, least plausible elements of Schopenhauer's philosophy of art. Instead, Beckett uses 'the Idea' as an expression to refer to the objects of the Proustian narrator's visionary experiences. These visionary experiences, a list of which Beckett presents to his reader, are taken by him to reveal, not a timeless, abstract, eternal form, but the true, undistorted, undiminished reality of a person's experience as it existed at a certain point in that person's life. Thus, Beckett here does not follow Schopenhauer's spiritual tendency. He tries to replace the philosopher's Platonist view of art with a more secular outlook, where art indeed has to uncover an 'object' beyond the surface of everyday phenomenal experience and voluntary memory. That object may be called the true, fully realised situation of a living being in his or her world – not an ever-transcendent general form. Thus, the object of art for the young Beckett remains transphenomenal and, in that sense, metaphysical – but metaphysical, as it were, in a modernised, sobered kind of way. That object is still to be perceived only in rare moments through contemplative, artistic vision.

Will-lessness, a Schopenhauerian term, also used later by Beckett to describe the deepest mental states of his hero Murphy, remains a necessary condition of the artistic experience just as in Schopenhauer, but with a new meaning given to the term 'Idea'.

Beckett's other point of departure from Schopenhauer consists in making no use of Schopenhauer's assumption that there is, as the ultimate ground of everything, a metaphysical, ever-transcendent will. Beckett indeed mentions several times 'the will' as a perfectly destructive element of our everyday life and voluntary memory. But all those passages may be read as referring to the phenomenal will of human individuals. There is no unquestionable reference to a transphenomenal, metaphysical will as the ultimate core of the world and of all its goings-on. This is all the more surprising as Beckett indeed also mentions a 'thing-in-itself' – but the characteristically Schopenhauerian identification of Kant's thing-in-itself with a metaphysical will as the ultimate basis of all reality is missing, at least in any explicit form. Although Beckett thereby renounces an important element of the Schopenhauerian worldview as a whole, we shall see that, in his literary practice, he keeps quite closely to Schopenhauer's description of the true nature and situation of any life on Earth. Beckett's literary work is not about timeless never-changing abstract forms or an ever-transcendent ground of the world, but about the normally overlooked or obscured true reality of living beings. That reality, according to the essay on Proust, may, in rare moments of will-less contemplation, be perceived beyond its everyday surface by the artist, and then preserved, so to speak, in a work of art.

## III.

Turning now to Beckett's own literary work, I shall try to exemplify Beckett's Schopenhauerian leanings, as one may call them, by taking a closer look at his drama *Fin de partie* alias *Endgame*. The reason I choose *Endgame* as my example is that Beckett's other great drama, *Waiting for Godot*, almost too obviously calls for a Schopenhauerian reading, just as does the trilogy of novels *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, *The Unnamable*. In *Waiting for Godot*, for instance, what Schopenhauer claimed to be the essence of life seems to be displayed with utmost clarity in Estragon and Vladimir's situation of persistent waiting without any chance of fulfilment:

> Life presents itself as a continual deception, in small matters as well as in great. If it has promised, it does not keep its word, unless to show

> how little desirable the desired object was; hence we are deluded now by hope, now by what was hoped for. If it has given, it did so in order to take. The enchantment of distance shows us paradises that vanish like optical illusions, when we have allowed ourselves to be fooled by them.[h,16]

The other pair of protagonists in *Waiting for Godot*, Pozzo and Lucky, provide an almost perfect model of Schopenhauer's famous saying: 'The world is just a *hell* and in it human beings are the tortured souls on the one hand, and the devils on the other.'[i,17]

The fact that we find, in *Waiting for Godot*, lots of details which obviously seem to point to a Schopenhauerian background, might have to do with *Godot* having been written at only a small distance in time from Beckett's first attempt at drama, a play called *Eleutheria*, which he wrote in early 1947. This is a play in which the hero, according to James Knowlson, 'deliberately cultivates a Schopenhauerian will-lessness'.[18] It was never performed or published in Beckett's lifetime. *Godot* was written in late 1948, less than two years after *Eleutheria*. *Endgame*, on the other hand, did not come along until 1956, in fact eight years later than *Godot*, and is in any case a more complicated and intricate play.

The reader may remember the main lines of what one might call the plot of *Endgame* – if there is any plot at all. *Dramatis personae* are Hamm, Clov, Nagg and Nell. Hamm, seemingly some kind of master, is a blind, sick, ageing man who remains seated in his chair during the whole play, since his diverse ailments keep him from standing up. Clov is some kind of servant whose diverse ailments keep him from sitting down. His main business is to follow Hamm's commands, which he does most grudgingly, to the effect that there is, between both, some kind of permanent dogged conflict. Nagg and Nell are Hamm's parents who sit, their legs being but stumps, in two dustbins at the very front of the stage. The scenery is an almost empty room in grey, colourless light with Hamm normally in the middle, sitting in his chair, and Clov performing some kind of service that sometimes involves him wheeling Hamm's chair from one point to another or looking out of the window upon Hamm's command. From Clov's reports about what he

h. 'Das Leben stellt sich dar als ein fortgesetzter Betrug, im Kleinen, wie im Großen. Hat es versprochen, so hält es nicht; es sei denn, um zu zeigen, wie wenig wünschenswerth das Gewünschte war: so täuscht uns also bald die Hoffnung, bald das Gehoffte. Hat es gegeben; so war es, um zu nehmen. Der Zauber der Entfernung zeigt uns Paradiese, welche wie optische Täuschungen verschwinden, wann wir uns haben hinäffen lassen.' *Ibid.*, III, 657.

i. 'Die Welt ist eben *die Hölle*, und die Menschen sind einerseits die gequälten Seelen und andererseits die Teufel darin.' *Ibid.*, VI, 319.

sees outside we may conclude that what once might have been a surrounding landscape is now but a dead, desert-like place in a grey light without sun. Apart from Clov doing some very minor duties and obeying orders, the main action of the play, if any, is provided by the unfriendly, often hostile dialogue between Hamm and Clov. This dialogue at first seems to be nothing but an empty meandering through seemingly irrelevant details of their existence, a dialogue as empty and meaningless as we know it from Estragon and Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*. Just one thing slowly emerges as a common aim of Hamm's and Clov's senseless blathering: both of them want to end. They want to end their useless goings-on. Both of them talk of wanting to die, but as in virtually all of Beckett's work, at least from the Second World War onward, there is never any final death for his leading characters. As it turns out, while the play goes on, to and fro between the most banal actions and bits of dialogue, it remains perfectly uncertain whether Hamm and Clov can at least end their stale togetherness by some definitive decision to part company or through other means. Only the stage action comes to a close, which, apart from some details of costume, consists in all parties standing or sitting, respectively, perfectly motionless at precisely the points on stage where the action began.

Looking at *Endgame* from a Schopenhauerian viewpoint, the world displayed there may be taken as an attempt to explore an artistic object outside the reliable structures of space, time and causality. In this – still rather formal – respect, *Endgame* does open up a reality that, in terms of Schopenhauer's philosophy of art, may be considered to be the object of an artistic metaphysical vision. That vision is supposed to transcend the surface of everyday phenomena and arrive at a view of true reality. That true reality for Beckett, as we saw in his *Proust*, is not a Platonic Idea, but the genuine, unbiased, unadorned reality of living beings.

It seems that not much discussion is required to show the absence of secure spatiotemporal relations in *Endgame*. The characters cannot locate themselves reliably in time, since their memory does not function reliably any more. One might conjecture that there is, at least, a reliable order in space. But that only seems to be so. The characters, for instance, give contradictory statements as to what is outside their present room. There is no guarantee that Clov's reports about the outside are not lies or just part of the concerted play between them. Hamm, at least, talks about the room in which they exist as being some sort of cell next to which there is no desert-like landscape, as Clov reports, but the next cell and so forth. This is demonstrated by a famous passage in which Hamm lays his hand against the wall and, quite

contrary to Clov's reports from the window, says: 'Old wall! *Pause*. Beyond is the . . . other hell.'[j]

Of course, all this does not provide complete spacelessness or timelessness. That would not be possible on a stage. Any performance on any stage is necessarily extended in time and is necessarily located in some sort of space where it is being presented. However, the *form of life* shown here is one which does not have the everyday means of order and stability that are normally provided by safely locating oneself at a well-defined spot in time and space. The decay of subjectivity to the point where this self-locating is no longer precisely possible seems to represent a form of life that definitely lacks any reliable system of order in space and time. Especially the absence of genuine temporality seems – despite the fact that the stage performance takes place in some sort of time – to be confirmed by one of Hamm's very last utterances: 'time was never and time is over'.[k]

Schopenhauer claimed that, when space, time and causality do not fulfil their function any more, when persons and objects can be seen outside their normal relations and connections with other objects and persons, what comes into view is the genuine, unveiled nature of life itself. What remains in Beckett, when his characters have lost any reliable memory, any secure orientation in space and time, when those characters are reduced to the poorest and most dire circumstances, when all this stripping down is completed, shows the most amazing similarity with the true unveiled metaphysical nature of life as Schopenhauer describes it to us.

The Schopenhauerian description of a world outside secure spatiotemporal orientation and causal order does not contain the illusions and small consolations which individuals in the phenomenal world still nourish or hope for. What is shown in Beckett's work, instead of empirically self-contained persons, is an existence that, in non-ending presence and non-ending pain, fits the propositions Schopenhauer uses for giving a timeless image of life in general: 'essentially *all life is suffering*', 'a constant striving without end and without rest', 'an unquenchable thirst', 'need, lack, and hence pain', 'a concretion of a thousand wants and needs',[l] 'hunting for ever different deceptive forms',[m] 'our state is so wretched that complete non-existence

j. Samuel Beckett, *Endgame: A Play in one Act, followed by Act without Words: A Mime for one Player*, translated from the original French by the author (London: Faber & Faber, 1958), 23. Since Beckett's translations of his own works of literature are, usually, second versions of the relevant text and are, as it were, authorised as such, I refrain from giving the 'original French' in the footnotes.

k. *Ibid.*, 52. l. Schopenhauer, *World*, I, 310ff. m. *Ibid.*, I, 319.

would be decidedly preferable to it',[n] '*a disappointment, nay, a cheat*',[o] 'a kind of mistake', 'something that were better not to be'.[p]

Two of the small consolations of individual existence in the phenomenal world, according to Schopenhauer, are sleep and the hope for personal death. It is those consolations that are explicitly denied to Hamm and Clov. One of the most important things Hamm wants to do in *Endgame* is to fall asleep. One of his first bits of dialogue, spoken to Clov, is: 'Get me ready. I am going to bed.'[q] It is this important wish Hamm utters repeatedly during the action; only his servant Clov does not provide the means for satisfaction. First, it is not yet time for bed: Clov tells his master, whom he has just woken up: 'I can't be getting you up and putting you to bed every five minutes.'[r] Furthermore, Clov informs Hamm that the most important means for his falling asleep has run out. Several times Hamm asks during the play: 'Is it not time for my painkiller?' Clov always denies this except close to the end of the performance when he finally answers in the affirmative. Indeed, it now is time for Hamm's painkiller. But: 'There is no more painkiller . . . No more painkiller. You'll never get any more painkiller.'[s]

Falling asleep is not a particularly secure means by which to bring the pendulum between pain and boredom to a standstill. There is always waking up. It seems death would do better as a permanent relief. Hamm wishes Clov to finish him. In exchange for a promise from Clov to kill him, he offers to tell Clov the combination of the lock to the food cupboard. Clov does not accept the offer. When the play seems to near its end, Hamm orders Clov: 'Put me in my coffin.' Clov's answer is: 'There are no more coffins.'[t] From the point of view of individuals who have to work off their pensum of permanent pain, the time before or after this life is seen as some kind of paradise. The act of begetting is seen as a grave misfortune, a deadly sin or worse. Hamm keeps cursing his procreator. At one point he starts talking about a madman who thought the end of the world had come. Clov asks when that was. Hamm: 'Oh, way back, way back, you weren't in the land of the living.' Clov: 'God be with the days.'[u] Those sentences, even though uttered by fictional stage-individuals, express quite well the valuation of life as Schopenhauer gives it to us:

> If we picture to ourselves roughly as far as we can the sum of total misery, pain and suffering of every kind on which the sun shines in its course, we shall admit that it would have been much better if it had

n. *Ibid.*, I, 324. o. Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, II, 299. p. *Ibid.*, II, 321.
q. Beckett, *Endgame*, 13. r. *Ibid.* s. *Ibid.*, 46. t. *Ibid.*, 49. u. *Ibid.*, 32.

> been just as impossible for the sun to produce the phenomenon of life on earth as on the moon, and the surface of the earth, like that of the moon, had still been in a crystalline state.[v,19]

It is precisely that state of the earth, the state of crystallised stone, that Hamm seems to long for with his fantasies of annihilating himself and all living beings. The adequate valuation of life, corresponding to Hamm's fantasies, was given by Schopenhauer long before: 'We can also regard our life as a uselessly disturbing episode in the blissful repose of nothingness.'[w,20]

No matter how often and how strongly the leading characters of *Endgame* may long for the ultimate end and the final sinking into nothingness: the world depicted here is such that there is no genuine end for these individuals. It is obvious from the beginning that *Endgame* is a play of a play, the play in which Hamm and Clov are playing the end and have played it many times before. The true subject of *Endgame*, therefore, is by no means ending or dying, but having to continue living in a hell-like ever-lasting present and not being able to end or die at all. What one might call the plot of the play, as mentioned, only leads to the point where the characters are positioned without any movement at precisely the places they had occupied at the very beginning – with but minor variations of their visual appearance, which, by Beckett's standards, certainly do not signalise a genuine end. It might be interesting that Beckett, when altering his text at quite a few points in the process of 'translating' it from French into English, did so with special emphasis on the stage directions concerning the beginning and end of this play. Those alterations firmly accentuate the perfect identity of the characters' positions on stage at the play's start and at its end. This looks as if the idea was that the characters, as in certain constellations of chess, have to play an endgame that cannot be brought to a genuine ending. Instead, if not broken off, chess endgames of that type can go on and on forever. Hamm's and Clov's attempts to arrive at a true end to their painful goings-on match quite precisely Schopenhauer's description of life as 'a constantly prevented dying, an ever-deferred death'.[x,21]

v. 'Wenn man, so weit es annäherungsweise möglich ist, die Summe von Noth, Schmerz und Leiden jeder Art sich vorstellt, welche die Sonne in ihrem Laufe bescheint; so wird man einräumen, daß es viel besser wäre, wenn sie auf der Erde so wenig, wie auf dem Monde, hätte das Phänomen des Lebens hervorrufen können, sondern, wie auf diesem, so auch auf jener die Oberfläche sich noch im krystallinischen Zustande befände.' SpSW, VI, 317.

w. 'Man kann auch unser Leben auffassen als eine unnützerweise störende Episode in der säligen Ruhe des Nichts.' Schopenhauer, *Ibid.*, VI, 318.

x. 'Ein fortdauernd gehemmtes Sterben, ein immer aufgeschobener Tod', *Ibid.*, II, 367.

Several passages in Hamm's and Clov's dialogue show that both of them desperately try to motivate the other party to bring forth a genuine ending. None of them is able and ready to relieve his partner. Clov's plea 'Let's stop playing' prompts Hamm's answer: 'Never!' Hamm's plea to be laid in his coffin is answered, as we noticed. When the action begins finally to slow down, Hamm utters the words which determine status as well as success, that is: everlasting failure, of this game: 'Vieille fin de partie perdue, finir de perdre.'[y] The English version seems clearer again. It says: 'Old endgame lost of old, play and lose and have done with losing.'[z] Here, the game of ending is lost 'of old' – for which there is no exact equivalent in the French text. That 'lost of old' seems to definitely pronounce that this game, having been played over and over again is lost since it began long ago. The end in terms of mere stage technology when all players remain absolutely motionless on precisely the spots where they began, just means a momentary standstill that marks the end of one round, which is just over, and may mark the start of the next round, which is about to begin. This is very much reminiscent of Schopenhauer's words as quoted at the beginning: 'the sun itself burns without intermission, an eternal noon. Life is certain to will-to-live; the form of life is the endless present.'

Seen from the perspective of Schopenhauer's philosophy, Beckett's *Endgame* exemplifies life as it presents itself to the Schopenhauerian metaphysical vision: individual death is meaningless and provides no redemption from the eternal midday of suffering. The individuals of *Endgame*, seen by a Schopenhauerian spectator, are phenomena on stage that have to represent the metaphysical reality of life as going on *without* end, an *ever*-swinging pendulum between pain and boredom – which is pain as well.

The striking similarity between *Endgame* and Schopenhauer's metaphysical vision of the nature of all life notwithstanding, that play *as a piece of art* also breaks away from Schopenhauer's conceptual means of saying what art is and has to do. Beckett is an author who, with an outspoken metaphysical tendency, presents a world view that has enlarged the limits of art so much that Schopenhauer's aesthetics (his aesthetics, not his metaphysics!) cannot follow him. Art in Schopenhauer's eyes has the task of representing 'the Idea' that the artist was able to behold in the contemplative, will-less artistic vision. As pointed out, Beckett determinedly moved away from that element in Schopenhauer's theory of art. As shown as well, by the time of his essay

y. Samuel Beckett, *Fin de partie* (Paris: Les Éditions de minuit, 1957), 110.
z. Beckett, *Endgame*, 51.

on Proust, Beckett is using the word 'Idea' for the true situation of a living being as the metaphysical vision of the artist can disclose it, not disfigured by everyday habits of attention and the subject's will-dominated, so-called 'normal' mode of perception. The content of the artistic vision, however, as Beckett's literary work since the Second World War, and especially *Endgame*, presents it to us, is even more cruel and more merciless than what the reader of the essay on Proust could have suspected. Despite no longer conforming to Schopenhauer's theory of art, the actual contents of what Beckett now shows us as a world of suffering, ever-recurring disappointment and, at best, tantalising boredom comes closer to Schopenhauer's metaphysical view of life than any art form Schopenhauer himself could think of. Beckett's art delivers us the desideratum that, as we saw, remains in Schopenhauer's system of art forms, that desideratum being an art that indeed does give us the image of life as the pendulum between pain and boredom, the never-fulfilled wishes, the non-ending deceit. If, judging him from his beginnings, one insists on calling Beckett an Idealist author, one has to admit that in the course of his literary development Beckett's early esteem of 'the Idea' has changed into what, in the end, may only be called *black Idealism*.

The reader may also remember that Beckett renounced yet another element of Schopenhauer's philosophy in the essay on Proust, namely, that the ultimate ground of the world is an ever-transcendent, unconscious will. Of course, there is no ultimate ground of the world being alluded to in *Endgame*. Beckett, despite being in intermittent reading contact with Schopenhauer, also developed parts of a metaphysical world view of his own. This can best be seen from his '*Sottisier*' notebook, which indeed has some of the Schopenhauer entries to which I referred earlier. A remark written between 13 and 18 January 1978 says: 'Ex nihilo omne fit'[22] – 'From nothing originates everything'. The word 'omne' (for 'everything') is written in bold letters and very strong ink above another word of similar length, which has been so energetically crossed out that it is almost no longer legible. But from some still legible elements and, moreover, from philosophical tradition, we can safely conjecture that the original entry, so decisively altered by Beckett, was the philosophically familiar 'Ex nihilo nihil fit' – 'From nothing originates nothing'. Beckett's strong emphasis on the contrarian thesis 'From nothing originates everything' shows that he, in the very end, even found some kind of substitute for Schopenhauer's ceaselessly striving transcendent will, namely, *nothing*. This may or may not have been prompted by the apotheosis of nothingness that we find at the very end of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*.[23] In any case, if we still keep asking about traces of an

Idealist world view in Beckett, we also must admit that Beckett in his later years moved away from typical elements of European Idealism even to the point of taking up a basically nihilistic stance. This again shows that Beckett, despite his lifelong Schopenhauerian interest and commitment, was not by any means an imitator or unquestioning follower of Schopenhauer, but, even in philosophical respects, an original thinker in his own right.[24]

## IV.

Trying to résumé briefly the probable reasons for Schopenhauer's enormous success among artists, especially 'modern' ones, one might mention his pessimism first. We need not dwell on this, since the quotations given above speak for themselves, particularly in conjunction with the appalling history of the last hundred years.

Obviously, it was also Schopenhauer's literary style that greatly attracted artists of all kinds. Besides being an eminent philosopher, Schopenhauer is also one of the greatest writers in the German language. In a letter to Thomas MacGreevy of September 1937, Beckett reports a bout of illness, stating that 'the only thing I could read was Schopenhauer', and finally adds: 'And it is a pleasure also to find a philosopher that can be read like a poet.'[25]

As pointed out, another powerful factor was the primacy of art over science and philosophy in matters of metaphysical (i.e., 'true') knowledge so insistently asserted by Schopenhauer. We find an almost universal approval for this element from Schopenhauer's earliest followers like Richard Wagner up to virtual contemporaries like Thomas Bernhard and Rolf Dieter Brinkmann.

Speaking of 'modern' art we may recollect the deconstruction of any reliable time-structure in many works of modern literature and the equally obvious deconstruction of 'normal' spatial relations in modern painting. Both developments are in line with Schopenhauer's claim about the artistically necessary annihilation of the 'normally' stable forms of space and time as a first prerequisite of artistic experience. Although Schopenhauer could theoretically approve of those modern developments, he was unable to anticipate them in detail – just as he was unable to anticipate dramatic forms like those of Beckett, which so closely match his metaphysical image of life, but do not at all match his idea of tragedy or any other kind of drama known by his time.

A similar case is Schopenhauer's rejection of realism in art. This should have appealed to many modern artists. According to Schopenhauer, there

can be no realistic art, since realism just sticks to the delusive surface of the phenomenal world, whereas only contact with true reality, in his terms 'the Idea', can provide the basis for works of art that transcend the mere phenomenon. Samuel Beckett was most emphatic in his rejection of literary realism. He scathingly denounced 'the grotesque fallacy of a realistic art' and 'the penny-a-line vulgarity of a literature of notations'.[26] Again, we find that Schopenhauer's overall thesis 'no realistic art' allows for emphatic consent without giving detailed specification as to what such an art should look like. We have to say again that Schopenhauer could never have foreseen the enormous diversity of non-realistic art forms that were developed by his many followers.

Talking about the philosopher's aesthetics, we have to mention his notion(s) of beauty as well, which differ significantly from those of his philosophical competitors. It has often been observed that the idea of beauty in almost any area of modern art has lost its formerly central position. The arts are no longer 'fine', they ceased to be 'schöne Künste' or 'beaux arts'. This is foreshadowed in Schopenhauer's mischievous attempts at defining or, at least, explaining 'the beautiful'. In the Third Book of *The World as Will and Representation* he starts the treatment of 'the beautiful' by putting forward several suggestions as to the meaning of that word – none of which satisfies him. In the end, he claims: 'Now since, on the one hand, every existing thing can be observed purely objectively and outside all relation, and, on the other, the Will appears in everything at some grade of its objectivity, and this thing is accordingly the expression of an Idea, everything is also *beautiful*.'[aa] As Schopenhauer still assumes that there is some link between art and the beautiful, this means that for him any thing whatsoever may become the subject of artistic work, and any thing, artistically presented, may even become a work of art. This certainly is a 'modern' trait of Schopenhauer's aesthetics, even if again he was by no means able to predict what actual kind of modernity might be in line with his thinking.

Leaving Schopenhauer's aesthetics and turning to his general image of human life, we must, quite apart from his pessimism, accentuate several traits of his notion of human persons that made him a perfect outsider in his time, but also an obvious vanguard of an age to come. First and foremost, we may recollect afresh that Schopenhauerian persons are driven by a blind, unconscious will, normally without having any chance of knowing that this

aa. 'Da nun einerseits jedes vorhandene Ding rein objektiv und außer aller Relation betrachtet werden kann; da ferner auch andererseits in jedem Dinge der Wille, auf irgend einer Stufe seiner Objektität, erscheint, und dasselbe sonach Ausdruck einer Idee ist; so ist auch jedes Ding *schön*', SpSW, II, 247–8; *The World*, I, 210.

is the case. Since Schopenhauer's role as a forerunner of Freudian psychology is sufficiently known, we need not linger here.

It may be less well known that one of the most brilliant treatments of the age-old free will question to be found in philosophy up to today is Schopenhauer's *On the Freedom of the Will*. According to Schopenhauer, we have no free will in the empirical world. This is the world where we have to spend our actual lives. Here, he claims, is the realm of thoroughgoing determinism, and notions of personal free will that claim to apply to real human persons are perfectly delusive. Samuel Beckett gives several nice hints towards a determinist world view in *Murphy*. The novel starts: 'The sun shone, having no alternative, on the nothing new. Murphy sat out of it, as though he were free, in a mew in West Brompton.'[bb] And several times the author makes his narrator put forward statements such as: 'So all things limp together for the only possible.'[cc] Schopenhauer is an outsider in his time by denouncing the then extremely popular notion of self-determination as illusory, and holding that, instead of human self-determination, there is thoroughgoing dependency of human selves on factors outside their control. His faint allusion to a metaphysical freedom beyond the limits of the empirical world at the end of *On the Freedom of the Will* reads like a mere homage to Immanuel Kant and was never taken seriously by his followers. It is in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* already that we find, in a manner obviously prompted by Schopenhauer's philosophy, extensive comments on the inevitability of events in this world and the illusory status of 'free decisions'. There was no need of Nietzsche's attacks on free will to make Schopenhauer's adherents settle for palpable empirical determinism instead of the lofty (and in the last analysis impersonal) freedom of an 'intelligible character'.

It is easy to overlook that, in a closely related matter, Schopenhauer also breaks away from common notions of his time only to arrive at a notion of human existence that again strikes us as being typically 'modern'. Idealists in Schopenhauer's time shared the popular Idealist notion of self-transparency, transparency of the self for itself. This notion takes different forms with different philosophers, on which we need not dwell. The important point here is that in Schopenhauer's philosophy human persons are normally struck with thoroughgoing *self-opacity* instead of possessing self-transparency. Once again, we find him in perfect opposition to his peers. Beckett refers several times to that in *Proust*. Maybe he is referring to himself when he claims: 'We are alone. We cannot know and we cannot be known.'[27]

bb. Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1963), 5. cc. *Ibid.*, 160.

Finally, we have to mention, for the sake of historical fairness, one important respect in which Schopenhauer would be utterly nonplussed by the development of the arts since his time: in Schopenhauer there is no genuine history, let alone progress in time. Since the ultimate ground of the world, the metaphysical will, exists outside all time, its utterances (shapes of its 'objectivity') are, in principle, always the same. As the forms of art, in the last analysis, according to Schopenhauer are utterances of the metaphysical will as is anything else in this world, there is no room for genuine change in art or in any other field. Maybe one of the greatest and most obstinate riddles about the influence of this philosopher on art and artists is that, especially in the 'modern' era, we find successive cascades of new artistic forms that amount to an obvious demonstration of the power of history. Quite a few artists who helped to produce those forms were enthusiastic followers of a man who, if true to his overall image of the world, would have to deny the very possibility – or at least any relevant artistic meaning – of such persistent change.

## Notes

1. Steven J. Rosen, *Samuel Beckett and the Pessimistic Tradition* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1976), 137–52; John Pilling, 'Beckett's "Proust"', *Journal of Beckett Studies* 1 (1976), 8–29; James Acheson, 'Schopenhauer, Proust and Beckett', *Contemporary Literature* 19 (1978), 165–79.
2. Ulrich Pothast, *Die eigentlich metaphysische Tätigkeit: Über Schopenhauers Ästhetik und ihre Anwendung durch Samuel Beckett* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1982), 132–208.
3. James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: the life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996).
4. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966) (hereafter *The World*), I, 281.
5. *Ibid.*, 279.
6. *Ibid.*, 312.
7. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*, ed. M. Tanner, trans. S. Whiteside (London: Penguin, 1993), 13.
8. For more material concerning Schopenhauer's enormous influence on the work and thinking of artists, especially during the twentieth century, see Anne Henry (ed.), *Schopenhauer et la création littéraire en Europe* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1989); Dale Jacquette (ed.), *Schopenhauer, Philosophy and the Arts* (Cambridge University Press, 1996); David E. Wellbery, *Schopenhauers Bedeutung für die moderne Literatur* (Munich: C. F. von Siemens Stiftung, Reihe Themen, 1998); Günther Baum and Dieter Birnbacher (eds.), *Schopenhauer und die Künste* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006).
9. Samuel Beckett, *Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit* (London: John Calder, 1965), 28.
10. Schopenhauer, *The World*, II, 580.

11. *Ibid.*, II, 580f.
12. Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena: short philosophical essays*, trans. E. F. J. Payne, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), II, 300.
13. Beckett, *Proust*, 93.
14. *Ibid.*, 54.
15. *Ibid.*, 63f.
16. Schopenhauer, *The World*, II, 573.
17. Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, II, 300.
18. Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 164.
19. Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, II, 299.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Schopenhauer, *The World*, I, 311.
22. '*Sottisier*' notebook, Reading University Library Manuscript 2901, p. 19.
23. Schopenhauer, *The World*, I, 411f.
24. For further details, see Ulrich Pothast, *The Metaphysical Vision: Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy of art and life and Samuel Beckett's own way to make use of it* (New York: Lang, 2008), 92–4, 232–4.
25. Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, 268.
26. Beckett, *Proust*, 76.
27. *Ibid.*, 66.

8

# German Idealism and the philosophy of music

Roger Scruton

German Idealism began with Leibniz and lasted until Schopenhauer, with a few central European after-shocks in the work of Husserl and his followers. That great epoch in German philosophy coincided with a great epoch in German music. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that Idealist philosophers should have paid special attention to this art form. Looking back on it, is there anything of this prolonged encounter between music and philosophy that we can consider to be a real advance, and one that we should draw on? Many have thought so, not least because Idealism, as it matured in the post-Kantian period, inherited the adulation for art in general, and music in particular, that we find in the writings of the German Romantics, notably in Schiller, Tieck and Wackenroder. The post-Kantian Idealists connected aesthetic experience with their claims to reveal the secret meaning of things, in the infinite, the absolute, the transcendental, the ineffable or some other such object of a quasi-religious devotion. Such we find in the writings of Schelling, Fichte, Hegel and Schopenhauer, the last of whom made music not only an object of philosophy, but a prime example of it. Music, Schopenhauer wrote, is not unconscious arithmetic, as Leibniz had claimed, but unconscious philosophy,[1] since in music the inner essence of the world, which is will, is made directly present to the intellect.

My own view is that the value of German Idealism for the philosophy of music lies not in those vast claims, made on behalf of music or philosophy, or both, but in an argument that begins with Kant's transcendental deduction and whose influence is felt right down to the times in which we live. This argument is not about music, nor does it necessarily point in a direction that could be called 'Idealist' – as that term was understood by Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. It begins from a specific premise, which Kant called 'the transcendental unity of apperception', taking the term 'apperception'

from Leibniz via Wolff. All philosophical enquiry, Kant argued, begins and ends in the point of view of the subject. If I ask myself what I can know, or what I must do, or what I may hope for, then the question is about what *I* can know etc., given the limitations of my perspective. It is not a question about what God can know, what is knowable from some point of view that I could never attain, or what is knowable from no point of view at all. To answer the question, therefore, I first must understand my own perspective – which means understanding what must be true of me, if I am to ask the philosophical question at all.

I know that I am a single and unified subject of experience. This present thought, this pain, this hope and this memory are features of *one* thing and that thing is me. I know this on no basis, without having to carry out any kind of check and, indeed, without the use of criteria of any kind – this, I believe, is what is (or at any rate ought to be) meant by the term 'transcendental'. The unity of the self-conscious subject is not the conclusion of any enquiry, but the presupposition of all enquiries. The unity of consciousness 'transcends' all argument, since it is the premise without which argument makes no sense.

This transcendental unity contains also a claim to identity through time. I attribute to myself states of mind – memories, hopes, intentions and so on – that reach into the past and the future, and that represent me as enduring through time. How is this possible and with what warrant do I affirm my self-identity as an objective truth about the world? Those questions underlie the argument of Kant's 'transcendental deduction' and this is not the place to discuss them. More important is Kant's expanded version of the transcendental subject, as he develops this in his ethical theory and also (although this is not often noticed) in his aesthetics.

The fundamental question of practical reason is addressed to *me* and it asks 'what shall *I* do?' I can answer this question only on the assumption that I am free. This assumption has a transcendental ground, since it is the premise of all practical reasoning and never the conclusion of it. Transcendental freedom, like the transcendental unity of apperception, belongs to my perspective on the world. It is not a perspective that could be adopted by an animal, since it depends upon the use of the word 'I' – the ability to identify myself in the first person, and to give and accept reasons for believing what I believe, doing what I do and feeling what I feel.

Fichte and Hegel developed those thoughts to provide a new form of insight into the human condition. The immediate awareness that characterises the position of the subject is, Hegel argued, abstract and indeterminate. It involves no concrete determination of *what* is known or intended

by the subject. If we were pure subjects, existing in a metaphysical void, as Descartes imagined, we should never advance to the point of knowledge, not even knowledge of ourselves, nor should we be able to aim at a determinate goal. Our awareness would remain abstract and empty, an awareness of nothing determinate or concrete. But as transcendental subject, I do not merely stand at the edge of my world. I encounter others within that world. I am I to myself only because, and to the extent that, I am you to another. I must therefore be capable of the free dialogue in which I take charge of my presence before the presence of you. That is what it means, to understand the first-person case. It is because I understand the first-person case that I have immediate awareness of my condition. The position that, for Kant, defines the premise of philosophy and that is presupposed in every argument itself rests on a presupposition – the presupposition of the other, the one against whom I try myself in contest and in dialogue. 'I' requires 'you', and the two meet in the world of objects.

The suggestion is illustrated by Hegel, particularly in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, with a series of parables, concerning the 'realisation' of the subject – its *Entäußerung*, or objectification – in the world of objects. Some of these parables (I am reluctant to call them arguments) are discussed in the literature of political science, notably that of the master and slave. Many of them convey profound truths about the human condition and about the social nature of the self. But what interests me is the idea from which they begin: the idea of the subject. This idea, it seems to me, is the abiding legacy of German Idealism in all its forms. And it is the clue to a philosophy of music. My considered view is that we should abandon the Idealist doctrine that the ultimate substance of the world is mental, spiritual or in some other way emancipated from the constraints of space and time. But we should adhere to the idea concealed within that doctrine, which is the idea of the subject, as the defining feature of the human condition, and the feature to which the mystery of the world is owed.

Kant argues persuasively in the Paralogisms of Pure Reason[2] that we cannot know the subject under the categories of the understanding – that is, we cannot look inwards so as to identify the I as a substance, a bearer of properties, and a participant in causal relations. To identify the subject in that way is to identify it as an *object*. The subject is a point of view *upon* the world of objects, and not an item *within* it. (That is what the word 'transcendental', in its legitimate employment, means.) It was Descartes' mistake to look on the subject as a special kind of object, and thereby to attribute to it a substantial and immortal nature of its own.

Nevertheless, even if the subject is not a something, it is not a nothing either. To exist as a subject is to exist in another way from ordinary objects. It is to exist on the edge of the world, addressing reality from a point that lies just beyond the horizon, and which no one else can occupy. This idea has been beautifully elaborated by J. J. Valberg in his book *Dream, Death and the Self*, and I have tried to say a little more about it, both in *The Face of God* and in the Stanton Lectures, delivered in Cambridge in 2011.[3] The main points that I wish to emphasise are two: first, that we each address the world from a standpoint in which our thoughts and feelings have a special and privileged place. All that matters to us is *present* to us, in thought, memory, perception, sensation and desire, or can be summoned into the present without any effort of investigation. Secondly, we respond to others as similarly present to themselves, able to answer directly to our enquiries, able to tell us without further enquiry what they think, feel or intend. Hence, we can address each other in the second person, I to you. On these two facts, I maintain, all that is most important in the human condition has been built: responsibility, morality, law, institutions, religion, love and art.

There is a consequence that is of vital relevance to the philosophy of music. I call it the 'over-reaching intentionality of interpersonal attitudes'. Not an elegant expression, but no worse, I suppose, than the 'transcendental unity of apperception'. What I have in mind is this: in all our responses to one another, whether love or hate, affection or disaffection, approval or disapproval, anger or desire, we look *into* the other, in search of that unattainable horizon from which she or he addresses us. We are animals swimming in the currents of causality, who relate to one another in space and time. But, in the I-to-you encounter we do not see each other in that way. Each human object is also a subject, addressing us in looks, gestures and words from the transcendental horizon of the 'I'. Our responses to others aim towards that horizon, passing on beyond the body to the being whom it incarnates. It is this feature of our interpersonal responses that gives such compelling force to the myth of the soul, of the true but hidden self that is veiled by the flesh. Because of this, our interpersonal responses develop in a certain way: we see each other as wrapped within them, so to speak, and we hold each other to account for them as though they originated *ex nihilo* from the unified centre of the self. You may say that, when we see each other in this way, we are giving credence to a metaphysical doctrine, maybe even a metaphysical myth. But it is not Descartes' doctrine of the soul-substance, nor is it obviously a myth. Moreover, a doctrine that is enshrined in our basic human responses, which cannot be eliminated without undermining

the I–You relationship on which our first-person understanding depends, cannot be dismissed as a simple error. It has something of the status that Kant attributes to the original unity of consciousness[4] – the status of a presupposition of our thinking, including the thinking that might lead us to cast doubt on it. Indeed, on one understanding of the matter, the adherence to this presupposition, and the practice that flows from it, is what Kant's transcendental freedom really amounts to.

So, why is this relevant to the philosophy of music? Kant notoriously had little to say about music, which he described as the agreeable play of sensations.[5] In Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer, however, we encounter a growing recognition that the subject–object relation has something to do with the power of music, the power that was coming newly into the cultural foreground with the Beethoven cult, with the rise in Germany of academic musicology and with the theory, which was later to dominate musical thinking, that 'absolute' music – music without a text or an explicit subject matter – is the true paradigm of the art. For E. T. A. Hoffmann (himself strongly influenced by Schelling), Beethoven's music unfolds a 'spirit realm', in which the subject is gripped by an infinite yearning.[6] For Hegel music claims as its own 'the depth of a person's inner life as such: it is the art of the soul and is directly addressed to the soul'. The chief task of music, he writes, 'consists in making resound, not the objective world itself, but, on the contrary, the manner in which the inmost self is moved to the depths of its personality and conscious soul'.[7] Schopenhauer identified this 'inmost self' with the will, and saw music as a direct presentation of the will, which for him was the 'thing in itself' behind appearance. To see what such philosophers were getting at, however, we have to put aside the ambitious systems that commandeer their arguments and look directly at the phenomena.

The first wave of post-Kantian Idealism treated the subject–object relation as marking a kind of metaphysical divide, objects on one side, subjects on the other. In Fichte and Schelling there is a kind of creation myth, according to which the world of objects is brought into being by a primeval sundering of the pure and integral subject. The subject remakes itself as object and so stands in opposition to itself in a condition of alienation. (I knows itself as not-I, to use Fichte's idiom.) This movement towards division is contained within the very essence of the real. It brings about a separation of spirit from itself, comparable to that ascribed by St Augustine to original sin. In Schelling, art in general, and music in particular, is engaged in repairing that primordial self-alienation. The Absolute makes itself perceivable through the objectification (*Entäußerung*) of the subject. In art, however, and especially

in music, the Absolute is led back into its primal unity as self-identity and self-perception.

Poetic and suggestive though that narrative is, I find it impossible to translate into anything remotely approaching a literal truth. Nevertheless, I believe that there *is* an important truth to be glimpsed, refracted and distorted, in the glass of Idealist philosophy. Properly understood, the subject–object relation implies that we approach the world of our experience in two quite different ways. To objects we apply the canons of scientific explanation, seeing them as held within the spatiotemporal nexus, and moving according to laws of cause and effect. Towards subjects we exhibit the 'over-reaching intentionality' that goes always beyond the object, in search of the place of freedom that lies on its edge. There is a philosophical question as to how the two approaches can be reconciled, and how one and the same thing – the human being – can be the target of both. But that question is not specific to aesthetics and demands a general answer that does not depend upon anything we might say about music. The case of music is interesting largely because music attracts the over-reaching intentionality that we direct towards the world of persons, even though it does not represent that world, but lives and moves in a space of its own. That, as far as I understand him, is the feature of music that occupies Hegel in his far from lucid remarks in the lectures on aesthetics. The same feature underlies Schopenhauer's far more systematic, if ultimately untenable, theory of music, as the non-conceptual presentation of the will. But it is a feature that is hard to explain in terms that are acceptable today.

Here is how I see the matter. I endorse the view, made central by later German Romantics, that music is an abstract (or, as they put it, an 'absolute') art.[8] But it is a view that must be stated cautiously. For one thing, music, as it is considered by the Idealist philosophers, is only one part of a larger cultural phenomenon, one that is to a certain extent the outcome of a transient social order, and indelibly marked by that order. The Idealists were writing about the listening culture that emerged in modern times, in which the concert hall began to be the central venue, with chamber music understood as an 'intimate' and peculiarly intense version of a larger public event. The listening culture demands concentrated attention to pure sound, in a place set apart from everyday life, and ringed round by silence. The central event, the concert, has a character that is best understood through the comparison with religious ritual: a collective focusing on an event that is not explained, but repeated.[9] While we can only guess at the origins of music in human society, it is plausible to suggest that it began with collective dancing and

spontaneous singing, in which the whole tribe joined, and that the musician, the rhapsode and the solo singer came later. Some people make a lot of this thought, arguing that the concert hall is a fleeting and soon to be replaced phenomenon, and that listening, as opposed to dancing, singing along or overhearing on an iPod, is a transient and unimportant episode in the history of music, or one that is peculiarly associated with 'bourgeois' society and therefore due to be overthrown in any truly revolutionary order.[10] Those suggestions are exaggerated, as we can see from reading ancient treatises on music, all of which make listening central to the phenomenon. But we must bear in mind always that the emphasis on the intrinsic meaning of music, as an object of attention for its own sake, is itself a historical phenomenon, not to be understood fully in isolation from the culture that produced it.

Secondly, we must be wary of drawing too sudden and precipitate a conclusion from the fact that instrumental music is an abstract or non-representational medium. Architecture, too, is such a medium, but the Idealists were not inclined to see architecture as having that special relation to the subject of consciousness that they attributed to music. Music, as we know it, is a non-representational art form. But it is not *this* that enables music to put us in contact with subjectivity, or 'the absolute', or the 'infinite', to use the language of Schelling and Hoffmann. An art form may be abstract and yet purely decorative, like the art of the carpet-weaver or the lace-maker. Common to Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer, however, is the thought that music reaches *beyond* abstraction in some way: it contains messages that have a special significance since they are not expressed in concepts, and are maybe inexpressible in concepts since they touch in some way on those areas of consciousness that we cannot put into words, but which nevertheless have immense significance in our interpersonal lives.

I take from the Idealist discussions two further ideas about music, concerning musical movement and first-person awareness. Schelling and Hegel both emphasise the special relation of music to time. Musical works unfold in time, but they also contain movement, organised by rhythm and melody into definite episodes. More – and this is an observation that Hegel comes near to making but never does quite make – musical movement takes place in a dimension of its own, in which there are places and relations that have no physical reality. Although there is movement in this musical space, there is nothing that literally moves within it – no note can move from one place to another and still be the same note and transposition of melodies and harmonies is not, in itself, a form of movement. At the same time, there are forces operating in this musical space – virtual forces of gravitation,

attraction and repulsion. There is rising and falling. There are hollow chords and dense chords, heavy melodies and light ones.

The phenomenology here is complex and delicate, and I try to say more about it in *The Aesthetics of Music*. I argue that nothing *literally* moves in musical space, but that in some way the idea of space cannot be eliminated from our experience of music. We are dealing with an entrenched metaphor – but not a metaphor of words, exactly, for we are not talking about how people describe music; we are talking about how they *experience* it. It is as though there is a metaphor of space and movement *embedded within* our experience and cognition of music. This metaphor cannot be 'translated away', and what it says cannot be said in the language of physics – for example, by talking instead of the pitches and timbre of sounds in physical space. Yet what it describes, the musical movement, is a real presence – and not just for me: for anyone with a musical ear.

It should not surprise us that the terms that we apply to music place it firmly in the arena of personal life. It moves as *we* move, with reasons for what it does and a sense of purpose (which might at any moment evaporate, like the purposes of people). It has the outward appearance of the inner life, so to speak, and although it is heard and not seen, it is heard as the voice is heard, and understood as the face – as 'visitation and transcendence', to use the words of Lévinas.[11] Unlike us, however, music creates the space in which it moves; and that space is ordered by fields of force that seem to radiate from the notes that occur in them.

Consider the chord: perhaps the most mysterious of all musical entities and one singled out for special attention by Hoffmann in his essay on 'Old and New Church Music'.[12] The chord, Hoffmann argues, referring to the polyphony of Palestrina, 'first awakened to life in Christendom; and thus the chord, harmony, becomes the image and expression of the communion of souls, of union with the eternal, of the ideal that rules over us and yet includes us'.[13] Clearly, however, Hoffmann is writing only of consonant or harmonically explicable chords. Yet not every consonance makes a chord – not even if it is composed from the notes of a single triad. (Consider the 'Hostias' of Berlioz's *Grande Messe des morts*, in which a B-flat minor triad on flutes is separated by four octaves from the B-flat on trombones, which seems not to belong with the flutes at all, even though it is the root of the triad.) In much modern music we do not hear chords but only 'simultaneities', sounds of distinct pitch and timbre that happen to coincide, but between which there is an empty space – maybe a space in which demons can grow, as in Schoenberg's *Erwartung*. A chord, whether consonant or dissonant, fills the

musical space between its edges; and it faces other musical objects from those edges. You can stuff more notes into it, but in doing so you are making it denser, not occupying previously unoccupied space. Here is another peculiarity of musical space: that two objects can be in the same space at the same time, as when contrapuntal voices briefly coincide on a single pitch, or when two chords are superimposed and each retains its separate *Gestalt* character, as in polytonal music, or when a melody enters the space already occupied by a chord, as when the A-major melody of the chorus in *Peter Grimes*, Act 1, barges into the space occupied by the huge A-minor/A-major chord on the orchestra. Chords have distinctive relations to the fields of force in which they are suspended. They can be soft and sloppy, like thirteenth chords in jazz – and that regardless of their dissonance. They can be hard and tight, like the final chords of a Beethoven symphony – and that regardless of their consonance. They can yield to their neighbours, lead into them or away from them, or they might stand out as sharp and unrelated.

It is a great weakness in the Idealists that they make so little effort to identify particular works of music and particular musical phenomena, in order to say *what is going on* in them. They do not confront directly the question that troubles me, which is how we understand musical space and what *kind* of movement occurs in it. Hoffmann gives concrete descriptions of the Beethoven masterpieces, and his remarks are both inspiring and informative. But he does not tackle the philosophical question, how we can hear in sequences of sounds those bursts of emotion that he describes so well. Schelling seems to be aware of the philosophical question, but he gives us no concrete example through which to comprehend it. Thus, he emphasises that tone (*Klang*) is neither noise nor mere sound, but 'intuition of the soul of the body',[a] and that this feature derives from the fact that music is organised by the principle of temporal succession. Hence, music is 'the art that most discards corporeality by representing *pure* motion as such, abstracted from the object, and is borne by invisible, almost spiritual, wings'.[b] So far, however, that is all metaphor. When it comes to building the observation into a philosophical argument, Schelling takes from Kant the theory of time as the 'form of inner sense', and stirs this into his observation concerning the subjective nature of tone to produce the following soup:

a. 'Die Anschauung der Seele des Körpers selbst', Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, SSW, I. v, 490, § 76. [All translations RS]

b. 'Diejenige Kunst, die am meisten das Körperliche abstreift, indem sie die *reine* Bewegung selbst als solche, von dem Gegenstand abgezogen vorstellt und von unsichtbaren, fast geistigen Flügeln getragen wird', *Ibid.*, 502, § 83.

> the necessary form of music is *succession*, since time is the general form of the implantation (*Einbildung*) of the infinite into the finite, in so far as it is intuited as form, abstracted from the real. The principle of time in the subject is self-awareness, which is the implantation of the unity of consciousness into the diversity in the ideal.[c]

The least that can be said is that it is hard to disagree with Schelling, for it is equally hard to know what it would be to agree with him. Without putting too fine a point on it, I would say that it is a general weakness of Idealist philosophers that they do not present arguments that can be engaged with from outside their own systems.

However the subject–object distinction might be put to effective use in a more modern, and I hope more lucid, form. The over-reaching intentionality that we direct to the world of persons is not confined to that world. In a religious frame of mind we look on the whole of reality as though it were the revelation of a first-person viewpoint: the viewpoint of God. We see things, then, not in terms of the laws of cause and effect, but rather in the terms that we use of people, when we call them to account for their actions. We look for reasons and goals, rather than causes and laws of nature. This is something more than animism and something less than theology. But it is a human universal, and it lies at the heart of our experience of the sacred and the numinous. Whether it is ever a *veridical* experience is, of course, the great question that theologians have to answer, and not a question for this chapter. But the Idealist enterprise was precisely to show that this intimation of reason at the heart of the natural world is indeed veridical. Fichte, Schelling and Hegel wanted to provide a substitute for theology in the form of a philosophy that gives access to the viewpoint of God – the 'absolute' perspective that is also the subjectivity of the world.

That ambitious enterprise showed itself to be futile and it is not my concern to demolish it. But it points to a more circumscribed and more fruitful application of the subject–object relation in the understanding of music. The listening culture that formed the background to the speculations of Schelling and Hegel was based on the transformation emphasised by Schelling of sound (*Laut*) into tone (*Klang*). This is a transformation in the ear of the beholder and comes about, I argue, when we adopt an 'acousmatic' posture towards the sound world, hearing sounds not as events in physical space, but as events

c. 'Die nothwendige Form der Musik ist die *Succession*. – Denn Zeit ist allgemeine Form der Einbildung des Unendlichen ins Endliche, sofern als Form, abstrahirt von dem Realen, angeschaut. Das Princip der Zeit im Subjekt ist das Selbstbewußtseyn, welches eben die Einbildung der Einheit des Bewußtseyns in die Vielheit im Idealen ist.' *Ibid.*, 491, § 77.

occurring in a space of their own, related to one another by the forces that govern musical movement. The acousmatic way of hearing brings with it the over-reaching intentionality of our interpersonal attitudes. We are listening for the subject beyond the object, the point of view that harbours the reason, and not just the cause, for what we hear. In representational works of art, such as pictures and poems, the subject is presented to the imagination as something separate from the work – the woman in the picture, the poet who speaks the words. In an abstract art form like music, the subject has no identity separate from the work. The subject that we hear, and whose voice this is, lies *in* the notes, a discarnate and incorporeal being who confronts us from an horizon that lies at the edge of these very sounds. That is what moves us in the great works of the listening culture: works like the quartets of Beethoven and Schubert that stare at us from a realm that is entirely emancipated from physical reality.

This suggestion gives rise to another: namely, that, through music, we can in some unique way *enter into* a subjectivity that is not our own and, indeed, not anyone's. This is the suggestion that we find in Schopenhauer and, in conclusion, it is worth visiting his account of the metaphysics of music. Schopenhauer was the only post-Kantian who regarded the problem of music and its meaning as a test case for his philosophy. His theories had a profound impact on Wagner, whose reading of Schopenhauer fostered his conception of a drama that would unfold entirely through the inner feelings of the characters. These feelings, hinted at in words, would acquire their full reality and elaboration in music. Developing under its own intrinsic momentum, the music would guide the listener through subjective regions that were otherwise inaccessible, creating a drama of inner emotion framed by only the sparsest gestures on the stage – gestures that, for this very reason, would become so saturated with meaning as to reach the limits of their expressive potential.

Schopenhauer saw music as a unique form of knowledge, with a status among the arts that was both exalted and metaphysically puzzling. Unlike poetry or figurative painting, music employs no concepts and presents no narrative of an imaginary world. Its meaning is contained within itself, inseparable from the ebb and flow of its abstract lines and harmonies. Yet listening to a great work of music we feel that we are gaining insight into the deepest mysteries of being – although an insight that lives in the music and defies translation into words. Schopenhauer's theory offers both to explain and to vindicate this feeling, and at the same time to exalt music to a metaphysical position matched by no other art form. Music, Schopenhauer tells us, 'is the

most powerful of all the arts, and therefore attains its ends entirely from its own resources'.[d,14]

Simply put, Schopenhauer's theory tells us that music acquaints us with the will – of which he gives an intriguing metaphysical account. Will, for Schopenhauer, is the Kantian 'thing-in-itself', the indescribable reality behind the veil of human perception, whose operations we know through our own self-awareness. The will cannot be known through concepts, since they provide us merely with representations and never with the thing-in-itself. Our inner knowledge of the will is therefore non-conceptual, a direct and unspeakable access to the metaphysical essence. This non-conceptual knowledge is offered also by music. Unlike painting and literature, music is not a form of representation, nor does it deal in Platonic ideas, which are the common resource of all the other arts. Music exhibits the will directly. This explains its power: for it also *acts* on the will directly, raising and altering the passions without the intermediary of conceptual thought. Through consonance and dissonance music shows, in objective form, the will as satisfied and obstructed; melodies offer the 'copy of the origination of new desires, and then of their satisfaction';[e,15] suspension is 'an analogue of the satisfaction of the will which is enhanced through delay',[f,16] and so on. At the same time, because music is a non-conceptual art, it does not provide the objects of our passions, but instead shows the inner working of the will itself, released from the prison of appearances. In opera and song the words and action provide the subject matter of emotion, but the emotion itself is generated in the music: 'In opera, music shows its heterogeneous nature and its superior intrinsic virtue by its complete indifference to everything material in the incidents.'[g,17]

As it stands, Schopenhauer's theory succeeds in vindicating the expressive power of music only by linking music to his conception of the will as 'thing-in-itself'. Moreover, the theory is in danger of self-contradiction. Schopenhauer denies that music represents the will; but he also says that music 'presents', 'exhibits' ('*darstellt*'), even offers a 'copy' ('*Abbild*') of the will, and what these terms mean is never explained. Moreover, if it is really true that the will is the thing-in-itself behind appearances, then nothing can be said about it. All meaningful statements concern representations and

d. 'Die mächtigste unter allen ist und daher ihre Zwecke ganz aus eigenen Mitteln erreicht', SpSW, III, 512.
e. 'Drückt die Melodie das vielgestaltete Streben des Willens aus, aber immer auch . . . die Befriedigung', *Ibid.*, II, 307.
f. 'Analog der verzögerten, erschwerten Befriedigung', *Ibid.*, II, 308.
g. 'Dabei jedoch zeigt, in der Oper, die Musik ihre heterogene Natur und höhere Wesenheit durch ihre gänzliche Indifferenz gegen alles Materielle der Vorgänge', *Ibid.*, III, 514.

ideas. Music belongs in the world of appearance and is, indeed, nothing more than an appearance, which exists only for those with ears to hear it. Hence, it is strictly meaningless to speak of an analogy between the movement that we hear in music and the striving of the will itself.

Nevertheless, those philosophical difficulties do not affect the core of truth in the theory. Schopenhauer tells us that the non-conceptual awareness that we have of our own mental states is really an awareness of the will; he also tells us that the will is objectively presented to us without concepts in the work of music. In these two statements we can 'divide through' by the will, to use Wittgenstein's metaphor:[18] reference to the will is an unwarranted addition to another and more intelligible theory, which tells us that in self-knowledge we are acquainted with *the very same thing* that we hear in music. To put it in another way: music presents subjective awareness in objective form. In responding to expressive music, we are acquiring a 'first-person' perspective on a state of mind that is not our own – indeed, that exists unowned and objectified, in the imaginary realm of musical movement.[19] In Eliot's suggestive words: 'you are the music / While the music lasts'.[20]

So understood, Schopenhauer's argument can be detached from his metaphysics of the will, which, like all the metaphysical theories of the Idealists, is open to the fatal objection that it assumes a point of view on the world that is strictly unobtainable, and which indeed Kant had shown to be unobtainable in *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Combining the two lines of enquiry that I have followed in this chapter we can present a single, plausible and comprehensive theory of musical understanding towards which all the Idealists were working, hampered by their gross metaphysical ambitions, on the one hand, and their musical incompetence, on the other, but defensible in terms other than those they appealed to. According to this theory, sounds become music when they are organised in such a way as to invite acousmatic listening. Music is then heard to *address* the listener, I to you, and the listener responds with the over-reaching attitudes that are the norm in interpersonal relations. These attitudes reach for the subjective horizon, the edge behind the musical object. The music invites the listener to adopt its own subjective point of view, through a kind of empathy that shows the world from a perspective that is no one's and therefore everyone's. All this is true of music in part because it is an abstract, non-representational art, in part because it avails itself of temporal organisation in a non-physical space. The question that now confronts us is, how do we distinguish the significant from the insignificant presentation of the subject in music, the true from the fake and the profound from the banal? In other words, how do we build from the residual metaphysics

of Idealism a plausible critical response to music? Or is the metaphysics just too abstract to lend a helping hand? Here is where things become serious.

## Notes

1. Dale Jacquette (ed.), *Schopenhauer, Philosophy and the Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 209.
2. KW, IV, 341–99.
3. J. J. Valberg, *Dream, Death and the Self* (Princeton University Press, 2007); Roger Scruton, *The Face of God* (London: Continuum, 2012). The Stanton Lectures are currently available on the website of the Faculty of Divinity at: http://sms.cam.ac.uk/collection/1180475.
4. KW, III, 134–82 (A95–130/B129–69).
5. KW, X, 427f.
6. David Charlton (ed.), *E. T. A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 98.
7. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: lectures on fine art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), II, 890.
8. For the emergence of the concept of 'absolute music' in the period of German Romanticism, see the meticulous study by Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, trans. Roger Lustig (University of Chicago Press, 1989).
9. I consider some of the implications of this comparison in the last chapter of *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).
10. The yawn-inducing attack on the 'bourgeois culture of listening' can be found in Hanns Eisler, 'Musik und Politik', in *Musik und Politik. Schriften 1924–1948* (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1973); discussed in ch. 1 of Dahlhaus, *Idea of Absolute Music*. You find similar in Ernst Bloch, *Essays on the Philosophy of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), who was perhaps the last Idealist in the philosophy of music, profoundly influenced by the Hegelian idea of the subject.
11. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Humanism of the Other*, trans. Nidra Poller (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 44.
12. *Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, 357–63.
13. Quoted in Dahlhaus, *Idea of Absolute Music*, 25; see *Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, 357.
14. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 5 vols., eds. and trans. Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman and Christopher Janaway (Cambridge University Press, 2011), I, 262.
15. *Ibid.*, 264.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*, 263.
18. See L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 4th edn (Chichester: John Wiley, 2010), Pt 1, § 293.
19. I have defended this view at length in *The Aesthetics of Music*, and assume, for present purposes, an intuitive understanding of what it means.
20. T. S. Eliot, 'The Dry Salvages', *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber, 1969), 190.

9

# The music of German Idealism

Andrew Bowie

Anyone reading much of what is written about music in the analytical tradition of philosophy might be hard put to understand why anyone bothers to listen to and play music at all. Repeated discussion of whether music expresses emotions, what a musical work is, etc., involves doing what some of the rest of analytical philosophy does in relation to other aspects of the world, namely, seeking to establish which concepts can be applied correctly to whatever the object of investigation is. This kind of approach to philosophy is part of what can be challenged by ideas that developed in the period of German Idealism and that are today again becoming central to philosophy, notably via the effects of recent new versions of pragmatism. Instead of the first question being 'What is the truth about the properties of the object x?', the questions that are implicit in certain aspects of the re-orientation of philosophy in German Idealism are 'How has x come to be significant at all?' and 'What sense does x make, and how?'. With regard to music, such questions allow us to stop thinking of it as an object of philosophy to be determined by conceptual analysis or as an object of natural scientific investigation and, instead, think in terms of the sense that music makes of the world, and why this kind of sense-making is so fundamental to many people's lives today, in ways which much philosophy as presently practised demonstrably is not. My title, then, is meant in both the subjective and objective genitive: I want to argue for the 'musical' nature of some of the most interesting philosophy in the Idealist period, and to consider how the nature of music changes in ways that can both illuminate and be illuminated by Idealist philosophy. The approach adopted here will, as anyone familiar, for instance, with Hegel's assessment of music may already be thinking, not necessarily rely on what was explicitly said in Idealist philosophy about music, but rather on how we

can use aspects of this philosophy to understand the often underestimated impact of music in forming the world we inhabit.[1]

Considering music and Idealism in the way I propose involves an initial rather complex historical combination. One of the features of the period from the 1790s onwards is a mismatch between what is said about music and the music that is composed by the significant composers. Carl Dahlhaus talks of the

> paradox that around 1800 there was neither a classical music aesthetic to correspond to the classical music of Haydn and Mozart, nor a romantic music to correspond to the romantic music-aesthetic of Wackenroder and Tieck. Reflection and compositional practice were widely divergent.[2]

He shows that, while Tieck founds the aesthetics of 'absolute music' by separating music from 'the rhetorical and the characteristic', Beethoven, the composer who was to produce music that gave such impetus to the idea of absolute music, thought of his works precisely in terms of their rhetorical impact and as involving the 'characteristic'.[3] The lack in theoretical discourse of an articulation of existing musical practice, and the lack in musical practice of a realisation of existing theoretical ideas point to the way in which different forms of articulation can both complement and contradict each other at different times. Rather than this situation being seen as involving some kind of failure in philosophical or artistic terms, it already points to the kind of dynamic thinking in terms of contradiction, as the motor of greater insight into and the emergence of new responses to the world, which is central to the best aspects of Idealist philosophy. The tendency in philosophy to think too exclusively in terms of conceptual determination of its objects, rather than in terms of other kinds of relationship to them, is here contrasted with how music may show that differing forms of articulation and expression offer ways of disclosing the world that may be hidden from philosophy, and vice versa. Given the two-way, dialectical nature of this process, the very idea of two wholly separate domains is put in question: if music can do things often associated with philosophy, it has some kind of right to be called philosophical. If philosophy should have to do with making sense of the world, rather than, as too often these days, just with building explanatory theories, music plays this role in new ways, beginning in the Idealist period.

Around the same time as Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and others revolutionised modern music, setting in train developments that can be said

to change what music is, the post-Kantian German Idealist philosophers began a revolution in philosophy that arguably has still to achieve all its potential. Why otherwise would so many leading philosophers now take seriously a movement that analytical philosophy for so long regarded – and in some areas still regards – as hopelessly obscure? How, though, is one to interpret the simultaneity of these two developments? As should already be clear from the two meanings of the idea of the 'philosophy of music', I do not think this is just a case of connecting two pieces of intellectual history. Nor do I think that the valuable refinements and clarifications of German Idealism that have resulted from the new analytically informed reconstructions and appraisals of it by Brandom, McDowell, Pippin and others, grasp the full implications of the constellation at issue here. Rather, I want to suggest that what may be most important about what happened in the period in question can best be approached by realising that philosophy may sometimes need to become more 'musical' if it is to be able to respond to some key metaphysical questions, and music itself can be said to become 'philosophical' as a result of its changing role. Following A. W. Moore's excellent reappraisal of modern metaphysics, the issue I am concerned with, then, is that of 'making sense', and of 'making sense of making sense' with respect to the kinds of sense made by philosophy and music in modernity.[4]

We can begin to see how what interests me becomes apparent if we look at why modern questions of freedom change their status, in ways that culminate in some of the central tensions in German Idealism. The obvious problem with philosophical discussion of freedom is that nobody really agrees what freedom is. Indeed, defining freedom can be construed as threatening to obscure what freedom is. This leads Fichte to suggest that freedom is in some sense the very condition of being able to do philosophy at all, as a task that has to be realised by the subject, rather than something that can rely on dogmatic assumptions – hence, freedom's 'infinite' status, in opposition to that which can be determined conceptually by being related to other determinations of things in the world. A key tension that becomes apparent in the period following Kant is between the related ideas of freedom as what results for the subject from the growing demise of traditional authority based on the foundation of a transcendent deity, and freedom as self-determination according to freely chosen norms. The demise of transcendent authority creates the space in which what people do is no longer bound by something to which they are dogmatically compelled to subscribe. The problem here is how to establish a new basis for determining what one does that is not merely contingent, rendering action the result of mere caprice. Rousseau

already saw the danger that one would thereby simply become the slave of one's passions. The Kantian response to this is to seek a way of establishing a new kind of authority on the basis of the notion that self-determination consists precisely in the fact that the subject, while also being a thing of nature driven by natural urges, can countermand those urges in the name of the assumption of duty based on shared humanity. The crucial problem here is that freedom then seems to become just submission to laws that exclude our essential nature as beings whose lives can make sense not least by the fulfilment and sublimation of drives. This much is quite familiar and forms the focus of debate from Schiller and Fichte onwards. The connection of freedom to music involves a further crucial element.

It has often been remarked that the main thinkers in German Idealism paid little sustained attention to language, as Reinhold had already observed in 1812:

> In regard to these discussions about the possibility of philosophy as science, which have distinguished this period in the history of philosophy, it is an undeniable, though hardly noted fact . . . that the relation of thinking to speaking and the character of linguistic usage in philosophizing in no way came under scrutiny and to formulation.[5]

The issue here is how such reflection on language, which is, unlike in Kant and much of German Idealism, very much a part of early Romantic philosophy, via the work of Hamann and Herder, relates to music.[6] Language repeats in certain respects the tension seen in relation to freedom: on the one hand, it becomes emancipated from the idea of a divine origin and so comes to be regarded as the means of individual subjective expression; on the other, it depends on the subject submitting to shared social norms that necessarily limit the scope of individual initiative. Total freedom would in this sense be bought at the price of unintelligibility. It is common currency in the period not to regard freedom as mere licence, and as therefore not simply opposed to necessity, and the new views of language seem to confirm the social nature of freedom. We do not choose or invent the language we speak, and speaking involves a kind of norm-governed self-determination that is related to the basis of post-Kantian practical philosophy.

Language seems, then, to involve analogous issues to those in the debates over the relationship between freedom and nature that become acute in modernity, as the realisation dawns that humankind is essentially another part of nature. Thought is what is supposed to separate us from nature, but, as Herder, Schleiermacher and others make clearer than ever before, it depends

on language. Language itself, though, arises in a 'natural' manner, because it cannot be said to be the product of 'reason' as pure spontaneity, being in some sense reason's condition of possibility, even as it then separates us from nature by allowing us to classify and objectify nature, and so, in some sense, depends on 'reason' as its condition of possibility.[7] It should be apparent that the notions of 'nature' and 'reason' have differing senses here. As Schelling will come to realise, so inaugurating the idea of a 'dialectic of Enlightenment', reason itself, like language, cannot explain its own origin and so cannot be definitively separated from nature, and this is crucial to the issue of music.

To understand how these questions relate to music, we need now to consider briefly the change in the status of music in Europe that occurs simultaneously with the Kantian and post-Kantian revolutions in philosophy, and with the changes in ideas about language. The simple point, as Dahlhaus indicates, is that music without words moves for many thinkers from being an inferior form to being the most significant form of music – 'absolute music' – precisely because it lacks words.[8] At the same time, wordless forms like the string quartet and symphony undergo dramatic transformations, epitomised by Beethoven's *Eroica* and *String Quartet Opus 130* with the 'Grosse Fuge' last movement, which massively extend their expressive, existential and structural possibilities. Concomitantly, music comes to be seen by some as the highest form of art, where it was previously regarded as inferior to most of the other arts. The perceived emancipation from verbal language is decisive here. For this notional emancipation to be so significant there must be a fundamental shift in how verbal language is regarded, which is associated with the decline of the idea of language's divine origin. Whatever one thinks of the ultimate validity of the ideas here concerning music's relationship to language, the very fact that such ideas develop at all is highly significant. The history of philosophy can hardly be written as a history of definitively warranted ideas, and it is often better to see it as an expression of social and cultural tensions.

The final element in the initial picture is that the shifts with respect to music and language happen around the time when wild nature moves from being regarded predominantly as a threat to being regarded as something with a unique value for its own sake, a move which accompanies the emergence of aesthetics as a specifiable area of philosophy concerned with beauty and art in terms of their relation to the subject, rather than as attributes of divinely created nature or as reflections of a pre-existing world order. The subject can now see itself as part of a nature, which in some sense 'speaks'

because it becomes a resource for making sense, be it in musical, visual or poetic form. Just how far such sense is essential to philosophy is, of course, the issue: in certain versions of Idealism, like Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism*, the reconciliation of spirit and nature is enacted by art as the 'organ of philosophy'.[9] Schelling came to distance himself from this emphatic position, but the idea that sense-making has to do with how we can connect to nature in non-cognitive terms is vital to certain directions in modern philosophy.[10]

What we have here, then, is a series of profound shifts in the forms and nature of sense-making that take place in relation to the growing secularisation of Europe, the beginnings of the scientific revolution and the drive for political emancipation. The enduring significance of certain ideas in German Idealism lies in the way in which they help us to understand such shifts in the most fundamental ways in which we make sense, shifts in which the very meaning of 'nature', 'reason', 'language', 'music', is transformed. If music is seen to make maximal sense when it is free of the kind of determinacy involved in verbal expression, it suggests questions about the nature of linguistic sense-making that are likely to be occluded when philosophy takes the analysis of language as its essential task. This extreme view of music is, of course, not shared by some of the key Idealist thinkers, especially not by Hegel, so the question is how what underlies this view of music, and the growing significance of music itself, relate to the Idealist project.

German Idealism is widely agreed to be a critical response to Kant's establishing the dualism between nature and freedom outlined above, where nature in the 'formal sense' is a system of necessary laws and freedom is located in a separate 'intelligible' realm. Hamann had already suggested how language was something that appeared as phenomenon in the causal sensuous realm, but could be language only via something intelligible that did not appear; and he thinks the oldest language is music. Now it is evident that what is meant by 'music' here is not by any means straightforward, but the idea that the dominant form in which human beings make sense, language, is in some sense grounded in music is not by any means unintelligible. What is at issue is precisely the ways in which forms of articulation make sense of the world, and the question is the kind of sense made by music, as something that is not the same as verbal language, but not separable from it either: both rely on rhythm, pitch, tone, etc. The basic idea can be summarised in the Heideggerian notion that music, like verbal language, is 'world-disclosive', that it makes aspects of the world 'unhidden' that would otherwise be hidden. These need not be objects or states of affairs that

we pick out by propositions, though some of them may become such. The most obvious case here is emotions, which music can evoke or articulate in ways that are impossible for verbal language. When Heidegger talks of 'attunement' ('*Stimmung*'), the musical association of the term suggests what is meant, namely, a relation to the world that demands a particular form of articulation to make sense. Another example would be temporality, the sense of which can be changed by music's ability to let time be experienced in new ways. The decisive elements in this respect are the differences and identities between music and verbal language, both of which are manifested as natural sound, but require the action of 'spirit' to be themselves, just as spirit requires them to realise itself. Hegel talks, of course, of language as the 'existence of spirit'. The question as to verbal language's and music's relative priority in art, suggested by the rise of the idea of 'absolute music', makes it evident that there is a tension between the kinds of sense they involve.

Talk of music making sense might, though, seem questionable, especially from a narrow semantic perspective: is the real sense not that which is made by verbally formulating what the music may 'say'? The point of the Heideggerian idea is, though, that without the world always already involving pre-propositional forms of sense, propositional forms of sense would have no content, not least because the motivation for saying anything at all would be lacking. The easy way to understand this in the present context is to think of sound that does not make sense, from, at a higher level, wrong notes which ruin a piece of music, to noise at a lower level. The contrast between what makes sense and what does not expands the scope of how we talk about sense by making us aware that the line between the two is constantly shifting. The image of the world as a whole suggested in this awareness seems to me philosophically crucial, and it is in German Idealism and the music of the Idealist period that such an image begins to be apparent in new ways, insofar as both become concerned more with the dynamic, changing nature of reality, in which things can come to make sense that previously did not by being brought into new relationships with each other, than with fixing it in the manner of previous metaphysics.

The history of modern music in particular can be told precisely in terms of the incorporation of the previously senseless, from harmonies that were forbidden by dominant norms to kinds of sound perceived as noise, intensified rhythms, into music, so that it comes to make sense. The question is why this expansion of the means seen as valid for music takes place at all at this time, and this has to do with the questions of freedom and nature that concerned us above. The changed status of music in relation to language is

connected to a drive to develop the technical and expressive means of music of a kind never before present in the history of music. Schleiermacher asks with respect to modern music: 'How has this direction towards free production in sound [*Ton*] been able to expand itself to such an infinity above what is given in nature?', contrasting the rapid development of musical instruments as extensions of the human voice with poetry's lack of extensive development of the material of language.[a]

Music is seen as a means of overcoming a lack that is perceived in verbal language, and this basic idea can build a bridge to key concerns in Idealist philosophy. In modernity, the making of sense no longer has to be seen as relying on the search for a pre-given order. It can result rather from the drive to counter the negativity that derives from what is missing in existing resources for explanation, articulation and expression. The idea should be familiar: the dialectic associated with Hegel is driven by the lack that emerges in ways of comprehending the world that is to be overcome by moving to more adequate forms of comprehension. However, in Hegel, this process is conceived of in predominantly conceptual, rationalist terms, and this leads him to see music as an important, but deficient, mode of coming to terms with the modern world because it is essentially an expression of subjective inwardness, rather than a fully realised engagement between subjective and objective. In contemporary Hegelian terms, music does not reach the level of the 'game of giving reasons' (Brandom), and so has a secondary status and depends on that game to be understood.[11] The freedom of thought lies in its responding to the negativity and contradiction inherent in modernity by grasping the necessities that accompany any cultural, cognitive, social and political development in inferentially justifiable terms. It is not that these may not entail painful negativity, but philosophy's job is to show how that is the motor of greater rational insight. What is being responded to here is the loss of any metaphysical idea of teleological justification: the order of things is a product of human interaction between subjects and between subjects and world. By being able to see the necessity in something no longer based on a metaphysical foundation, philosophy makes sense of things as part of a story of the immanent development of mind and world that tells us how we got to where we are.

Now think of the freedom of thought in the version just outlined in relation to language: insertion into the symbolic order is the condition of

a. 'Wie hat sich diese Richtung auf freie Produktivität im Ton bis zu einer solchen Unendlichkeit über das in der Natur Gegebene erweitern können.' F. D. E. Schleiermacher, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (Berlin: Reimer, 1842), 392. [all translations AB]

the realisation of such philosophical insight, freeing us from unintelligibility and enabling inter-subjective exchange. At the same time, however, what is enabled is bought at the expense of the subject's individual relation to its finite, embodied, affective being, whose relation to its world is constituted in a particular history of drives and their fulfilment or frustration. To this extent, resources can come to seem necessary that emancipate the subject from the lack brought about by the dependence of individual sense on the general symbolic order. The point is that both notions of freedom, the freedom that relies on inter-subjective norms and the freedom that allows one to avoid repression of individual ways of making sense, play a role in understanding the situation of the subject in increasingly secular modernity. Think, in turn, of the conceptions of nature that accompany these notions. On the one hand, nature is Kant's formal nature, a system of necessary laws, which many after Kant came to see as not being contrasted with an intelligible realm, but as wholly governed by what modern science discovers, such that freedom is essentially illusory. The dangers of such a view were part of what motivated Fichte, Jacobi, Schelling and others in their questioning of Spinozism. On the other hand, as Albrecht Wellmer acutely reminds us:

> The nature which we, as acting and deliberating creatures, are *aware of* as our own nature – the nature Adorno speaks of – is not the nature of scientifically objectified brain processes, but the living nature of our body with its neediness, its impulses, its potentials and its vulnerability.[12]

The first conception of nature is what comes to be seen as 'disenchanted', and so largely devoid of any sense beyond the explanatory laws that govern its functioning. The second conception of nature is precisely the realm in which we make human sense – in the face of the kind of senselessness characteristic of the first conception and of our own fallibility, finitude and mortality, but also of our capacity to transcend limitations. The inadequate responses in many areas of philosophy to the latter idea of nature can be said to reflect what leads to the importance of music as a way of making sense.

The greatest music of the Idealist and early Romantic period (which establishes the new significance of music that is then intensified by Wagner, Bruckner and Mahler) is characterised precisely by its confronting the pain and transience of human existence and making some kind of post-theological sense of it.[13] Indeed, the greatness of the music is in some respects measured by the degree to which it responds to the negativity: from, for instance, Beethoven's response to serious illness in the slow movement of Opus 132,

to Schubert's confrontation with despair in *Winterreise*, the result is not some kind of illusory triumph, but a transcendence of the painful ground from which the works arise and without which they would lose their substance. The connection to the issue of freedom and nature is suggested by the following assertion by the later Schelling: 'the reality of a liberation directs or determines itself according to the reality of that from which it liberates itself'.[b] From his middle period onwards, Schelling thinks in terms of a dialectic between 'ground' and 'existence' first set out in the essay 'On the Essence of Human Freedom':[14] without a reality from which we seek to emancipate ourselves, the point of freedom is lost because there is nothing essential at stake. What counts as the ground from which one emancipates oneself is a historical issue, not an ontological constant.[15] In the context of the changing relationship of music and language suggested above, when language comes to be experienced as involving the danger of failing to make sense of vital experiences, it intensifies the desire for forms of articulation that precisely negate the possibility of final determinacy, but at the same time still make specific kinds of sense to those who engage with them.

What, then, more specifically characterises music as so significant in this respect, and how does it relate to the specifics of Idealist philosophy?[16] In his *Philosophy of Art*, 1802/3, Schelling talks of rhythm as 'the music in music'.[c] The essential idea here is not developed in all its consequences by Schelling, but occurs in various ways in Idealist philosophy and in Friedrich Schlegel. What is in question is the making of sense at the most basic level, where the line between the natural and the cultural is revealed as a dialectic, rather than being something that can be established by defining nature and spirit.[17] Schelling says that rhythm is 'the transformation of a succession which is in itself meaningless into a significant one',[d] so linking music to general issues in Idealist and Romantic philosophy. There can be no sense at all if there is nothing but a chaos of differences. Sense depends on the establishing of identities, but that can also end in what destroys sense by immobilising how we understand the world: that is the basic idea of a dialectic of Enlightenment. Vital for the genesis of Idealism is Kant's 'transcendental unity of apperception', the 'I think that must *be able* to accompany all my representations'.[18] The transcendental unity makes it clear that the idea

b. 'Die Realität einer Befreiung richtet oder bestimmt sich nach der Realität dessen, wovon sie befreit', F. W. J. Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling, I Abtheilung, vols. 1–10, II Abtheilung vols. 1–4 (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856–61), II/4, 20.

c. 'Der Rhythmus ist die Musik in der Musik', *Ibid.*, I/5, 494.

d. 'Verwandlung der an sich bedeutungslosen Succession in eine bedeutende', *Ibid.*, I/5, 493.

of a world that makes any kind of sense depends in some respects on the synthetic capacity of subjectivity. But how does this unifying I arise at all? Genetic accounts of self-consciousness are crucial to German Idealism, and the connection of self-consciousness to rhythm, to which both Schelling and Hegel advert, is too often ignored.

Rhythm depends on a ground of unity for its moments to be apprehended as meaningful succession, which seems to give primacy to self-consciousness, as that which remains identical between the different moments. Hegel sees musical rhythm in these terms, as giving a 'feeling of self'.[e] At the same time, however, it has to be asked *why* it is that the moments make sense by being part of a succession that gives them their identity. The apprehension of the moments as part of the same succession, because something in the subject is the same across time, does not generate all the kinds of sense characteristic of rhythm, which has to do with connecting to the world in stimulating ways. Rhythm, then, connects self-consciousness to a kind of awareness of sense that is fundamental to human existence. John Dewey maintains that 'what is not so generally perceived is that every uniformity and regularity of change in nature is a rhythm. The terms "natural law" and "natural rhythm" are synonymous.'[19] From the earliest age, both ontogenetically and phylogenetically, human beings rely on the structuring effects of rhythm to establish stability in their world. One does not need to posit the kind of conceptual isomorphism of mind and nature present in some versions of Idealism to suggest that there is an affinity between internal and external rhythm that is germane to the genesis of sense. When Kant seeks a bridge between the categories of transcendental subjectivity and empirical intuitions of objective nature, he introduces the idea of the schema, and this can easily be related to rhythm and music. The schemata of cause, reciprocity, reality and necessity are 'nothing but *determinations of time* a priori according to rules',[f] and succession, simultaneity, existence at a certain time and existence at all times relate directly to what we need to make musical sense.

However, is the category of unity the ground of the apprehension of rhythm, or is the primary experience of rhythm, via which children, for example, begin to make sense of language and the world, actually the real ground that enables abstract forms like the category of unity to develop at all? In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant maintains that even though we no longer

e. 'Selbstgefühl', G. W. F. Hegel, *Ästhetik*, ed. F. Bassenge, vols. I and II (Berlin: Aufbau, 1965), II, 283.

f. 'Nichts als Zeitbestimmungen a priori nach Regeln', I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B 184, A 145.

feel any 'noticeable pleasure' in the forms of order that we come to know in nature via what he seeks to explain in terms of schematism: 'in its time there must have been some, and only because the most common experience would not be possible without it did it gradually mix with simple cognition and was no longer particularly noticed any more'.[g] As such, it can be argued that sense is grounded in a drive that inherently connects us to nature, both internal and external. The claim need not be construed in a dogmatic ontological manner, as the specific nature of the drive depends on the world in which it emerges. This drive is most obviously apparent in the way that children relate to the world, and music can in this respect be seen as sustaining something that is lost as the forms of order become more fixed. That helps to explain why music comes to be seen as achieving something inaccessible to verbal language in a period where the ability to control nature by ever-growing conceptual identification is becoming more and more dominant.

What should be emerging here is a different way of thinking about some of the most basic ideas in modern philosophy. Dieter Henrich has suggested that:

> Fichte was the first to arrive at the conviction that all previous philosophy had remained at a distance from the life and self-consciousness of human-kind. It had had ontological categories dictated to it which were taken from the language in which we communicate about things, their qualities and their changes. With these categories philosophy had then investigated powers and capacities of the human soul. It was therefore fundamentally unable to reach the experiences of this soul, the processes of consciousness, the structure and flow of its experiences and thoughts.[20]

Fichte's own success in achieving this new goal has arguably been quite limited: we are far from reaching any kind of agreement on what it is that he is really saying, and the language in which he tries to reach those experiences is always already freighted with objectifying significations that can get in the way of the articulation of the never finally determinable dynamics of self-consciousness. If we are talking about the 'impact of Idealism', what Fichte is seen as aiming at in Henrich's terms seems to me to be part of what is more successfully brought into modern culture by the music that emerges at the same time as his philosophy. The music of Beethoven and

g. 'Sie ist gewiss zu ihrer Zeit gewesen, und nur weil die gemeinste Erfahrung ohne sie nicht möglich sein würde, ist sie allmählich mit dem blossen Erkenntnisse vermischt, und nicht mehr besonders bemerkt worden', I. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, B xl, A xxxviii.

others is precisely characterised by its ability to articulate and express 'the structure and flow of [the soul's] experiences and thoughts'. This music leads to the dynamic of musical innovation that continues to this day and that still is able to command the attention of listeners as a crucial part of their sense-making.

Such a judgement is evidently problematic, insofar as the impact of Fichte's philosophical Idealism can really be understood only if it is considered with respect to how it comes to affect thinkers like Marx and Nietzsche, whose work plays a massive role in developments in modern history. That understanding, though, seems to involve a kind of regulative idea. We must always think of it when engaging with German Idealism, but at the same time we are aware that it is not something that can be realised fully, not least because the understanding will change in the light of the historical and cultural situation of those seeking to achieve it. The present project on the impact of Idealism would have seemed odd even to many scholars of Idealism not that long ago. Walter Benjamin, Adorno, Heidegger, Gadamer and others, all themselves deeply influenced by Idealism, remind us that the sense made by the history of philosophy is not a continuous sense, but one generated by constellations of present and past philosophical responses to inescapable contradictions.

In this respect, German Idealism's contemporary impact has to be seen in the light of why its influence declined so dramatically after the death of Hegel. One key reason for the decline is suggested by the contrast between the metaphysical and non-metaphysical readings of Hegel. The metaphysical readings claim that Hegel offers a systematic philosophical account that reconciles mind and world, in a kind of God's eye view. The interpretation proposed, for example, by Pippin and Pinkard,[21] on the other hand, argues that Hegelian reason is manifested in the norms of communities and in their capacity to reflect on the justification of those norms.[22] The significance of this contrast does not just depend on the assessment of the validity of philosophical arguments: it also points to the relationship of the practice and content of philosophy to its historical contexts. Seen in the light of real class divisions in nineteenth-century history, the idea of a reconciliation between mind and world easily came to be seen as a piece of ideology that cast suspicion on metaphysics in general as a form of false reconciliation. If one takes A. W. Moore's liberal interpretation of metaphysics in terms of making sense of making sense, it becomes possible, though, to argue for Hegel's deep insights into the social constitution of rationality.

However, Pippin has recently suggested that there is a limit to the capacity for making sense in Hegelian terms, and this takes us back to the music of Idealism and its implications for the future of philosophy:

> It would have astonished [Hegel] that, just as Enlightenment rationalism was beginning to pay off on all its great claims, with decreased infant mortality, public health, the rule of law, and so on, all the great artists and intellectuals of 19th-century Europe rose up in disgust and said, 'No, it's not what we wanted.' It was the beginning of the great bourgeois self-hatred that you see so much of in art.[23]

Pippin sees the underlying issue, which is a key theme in the first-generation Frankfurt School or Lacan's work, as having to do with 'what's going wrong in the basic, fundamental structure of human desire formation'.[24] Desire formation is prey to pressures that objectify what is desired, which can both devalue it and damage the subject who desires. This can happen, for example, via the commodification of objects of desire that affects the nature of the relations between people and makes the natural world and other people just objects of manipulation. Such processes are always two-edged, because they also involve aspects of modernity without which much that we would not wish to relinquish would be impossible. The demand is, then, for ways of coming to terms with this mixture of rational control and the awareness of what it can destroy in our relations to the world.

If we look back to the issue of the perceived priority between music and verbal language, the situation can be seen as being that music – even as it clearly involves rationally intelligible forms of order, from harmonic progressions to structuring rhythmic patterns – came to be seen as providing a specific kind of sense that is lacking elsewhere. This sense does not primarily involve the objectification that is also part of what is needed for successful science, which is evident in the reliance on the judgement form to convey scientific claims. Adorno, who admittedly too readily assimilates different kinds of objectification into a generalised post-Weberian story of rationalisation – as Axel Honneth and others have pointed out, objectification by commodification, and the objectification needed by, for example, surgeons, have very different significances and consequences – will later talk of music (and other art) as 'judgementless synthesis'. Pippin echoes Adorno's notion, and his comments are particularly apposite with regard to music:

> Art, precisely because it is a mode of non-discursive intelligibility, which does not consist in propositions, arguments, and syllogisms, nonetheless makes sense of ourselves in a way that actually resonates

> with what is now coming onto the scene as more important than the conscious deliberative capacities of individual subjects.[25]

What Pippin adverts to here with respect to modern art relates to the consequences of a tension at the heart of Idealist thought.

Idealism involves both epistemological responses to scepticism, which seek a new way of grounding knowledge in the light of the continual destruction of knowledge claims by scientific progress, and the awareness, suggested in Schelling's reflections on freedom, that the kind of sense that is part of what is essential to making modern life worth living does not necessarily reside either in justifiable knowledge or in the adherence to warranted norms. The massive growth in all forms of knowledge and the unquestionable benefits it brings, and the generally advantageous development of modern legal and moral norms, can often, as Weber's disenchantment thesis suggests, seem to offer little in terms of the kind of sense that motivates individual lives.[26] The claim here is that such sense has a lot to do with our nature, in the sense proposed, via Adorno, by Wellmer. The acknowledging of this nature in ways that enable us to transform its demands lies, as I suggested, at the heart of the great music of the period, offering an understanding of freedom of the kind Schelling proposes, as determining itself 'according to the reality of that from which it liberates itself'. German Idealism's desire to reconcile nature and spirit can, as Adorno argued, lead to the attempted domination of nature by spirit, which Schelling already warns against in his Freedom essay.[27] Art, on the other hand, can connect us to the world in terms of our drives and their satisfaction, but also involves reflective aspects of our cognitive and ethical relations to the world, rather than being the immediate fulfilment of desire of a kind that can become mere domination of the other. As we saw, music can be seen as constituted by rhythm, in the sense of what establishes meaningful succession, and what constitutes rhythm is not locatable solely on the subject or the object side of our relations to the world. Music may therefore shed light on the nature of the cognitive relationship to the world in ways that epistemology, as usually practised, does not. This might sound questionable, insofar as the understanding of what kind of light is shed would seem itself to belong to epistemology, but questions about the relationship between the cognitive and the expressive are vital here, because they lead us to decisive questions about sense-making.

Pippin's remarks on modernism make it clear that Hegel's philosophical response to modernity does not always offer sufficient resources for grasping how the making (and destroying) of sense comes about. Retrospective

accounts of how we arrived at the knowledge and the norms to which we adhere that are based on tracing the dynamic of the 'sociality of reason' offer vital alternatives to previous approaches to epistemological and metaphysical questions, and these have been developed in illuminating ways by Brandom and others. Such accounts do not, however, as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Adorno and others show, get at all that generates sense. Sense is not always theorisable in terms of inferential commitments and entitlements, and what is not theorisable in this way is not just a form of 'immediacy', an instance of the 'myth of the given' – the justified target of Hegelian critiques of empiricist epistemology. There is a difference between the immediacy of a notional sensory input, which has no cognitive content apart from its mediation in relation to other such inputs, and an experience, of the kind present in the production and reception of music, which affects one's relationships to the world in ways that are not reducible to how they can be discursively articulated. Hegel sees wordless music's lack of conceptual determinacy and transience as rendering it less significant than forms of art that involve meanings of the kind that are conveyed by words, which, although their manifestation as perceptible objects of sense is transient, sustain meanings across time.

What is missing here is an understanding of the sense that music makes of the world. Hegel thinks it merely makes sense of people's inner feelings, but this omits the way in which rhythm, for example, can structure how the world is manifest by connecting people to their environment in ways that make new sense. From the French Revolution to the Civil Rights movement and beyond, rhythm has, for instance, been more than a contingent add-on to what motivates social change. It is not, however, that what is missing here is just an alternative *philosophical* account of what makes sense in our existence: the very attempt to give such a conceptual account arguably misses the point raised by the tension between music and verbal language described above. The change in the status, reception and production of music in the Idealist period and after suggests that it is precisely at the borders of discursive intelligibility that forms of sense-making emerge which get closer to an articulation of some of the modern workings of sense than can sometimes be achieved in philosophy.

The questions that emerge with respect to music in Idealism highlight often neglected ways of considering the ends of contemporary philosophy. Anti-metaphysical construals of Hegel point to the decisive role of negativity in his thinking: knowledge, desire, social and political forms, artistic forms, are all premised on forms of negation, and absolute knowledge is constituted by insight both into the logic and the necessity and ineluctability of change

and destruction for the development of spirit. The threat of nihilism is therefore built into the fabric of Hegelian thinking, and its overcoming depends in Hegelian terms on rational insight into negativity as the motor of the development of *Geist*. It is here that the question of making sense is again decisive for how we think about the role of philosophy. What lies behind the new importance of music for sense-making is the fact that rational insight is not always sufficient to reconcile us to the workings of negativity. That is why Schelling's insight into freedom as determining itself by 'the reality of that from which it liberates itself' is relevant to great music, which arises from transcending the negativity in which it is grounded in ways that are often inaccessible to philosophy.

At the same time, as Adorno and others have pointed out, there are instructive analogies between aspects of Hegel's thinking and the music of Beethoven. In both cases the particular elements of thought and music may be insignificant in themselves – Beethoven wrote beautiful melodies, but many of his greatest works do not rely on them and depend instead on small musical 'cells' being developed and varied – but the elements gain their sense via the dynamic way in which they come to relate to other elements in a totality. It is often the transitions between parts of a philosophical system like the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and of Beethoven's sonata and variation movements that make sense out of the drive to move beyond any given element, even at the expense of what seemed to make sense in that element on its own. The very point of sense in this respect is that it is generated by movement itself, not by the establishing of something fixed in the manner of traditional metaphysics. The movement makes sense because it gives rise to a whole that animates the elements and orients them towards a conclusion, so generating an engagement on the part of the subject that is based on creation and overcoming of a lack.

This kind of sense-making is evidently very powerful, but it can give rise to tensions in the context of modernity, which can conspire to destroy sense or give the appearance of sense where there is none. Adorno is suspicious of Beethoven's triumphant middle-period culminations, in the *Fifth Symphony*, for example, for much the same reasons as he is suspicious of Hegel's claims to absolute knowledge, which seek to render the negative positive by claiming that its truth is achieved via its location in the whole. He sees Hegel's reconciliation of whole and part as ideological, insofar as the dominant totality in modernity is the commodity system, which threatens the kind of particularity that resists the reduction of the world to limited forms of identity. By mimicking the integration characteristic of modernity's rationalising instrumental tendencies – tendencies that Adorno sees as leading to the kind of

objectifications that make Auschwitz possible – Beethoven's heroic music lacks the critical element of his late works, where the integration of the parts involves a degree of self-critical fragmentation that questions the idea of final triumph. Such vigilance with respect to the ambivalences involved in sense-making is vital to the attempt to avoid a naively positive view of affirmative art: as Adorno remarks with respect to epistemology, and he sees the same applying to music:

> There is nothing in the world, even something as apparently objective as epistemology, which, should the occasion arise, could not take on a social significance, a function in society, which transforms it into the opposite of what it once originally knew itself as.[h]

However, Adorno tends to neglect the ways in which musical sense-making, precisely by being judgementless, can – in some circumstances – work in ways that are not susceptible to the repressions he sees in modern forms of integration of material into a whole. The question is the nature of this integration in differing forms of response to the modern world. This has vital implications for understanding the impact of Idealism, which was founded precisely on the premise of integrating understandings of a modern world whose dynamic is, in many respects, towards a growing lack of integration.

The new impact of German Idealism within contemporary philosophy undoubtedly has to do with a reaction against forms of philosophy, like reductive naturalism, which relegate what makes sense of human lives to the epiphenomenal, in the name of an ungrounded metaphysical decision that reality is what is explained by scientific laws. It is ungrounded because the claim that reality is what is explained by deterministic laws cannot itself, as Kant already showed, be explained in terms of what is entailed by that claim itself. The reaction against reductionism is, however, not just against whatever way reductionism is manifest in professional philosophy, but rather, as Charles Taylor and others contend, against forms of instrumentalism in society that are given sustenance by the idea that the power of scientific explanation is so great that other forms of sense are merely arbitrary. It is important to stress here that objections to this kind of naturalism do not entail a rejection of well-warranted science, rather just a rejection of metaphysical claims that only a world described in terms of timeless laws

h. 'Es gibt nichts in der Welt, auch etwas scheinbar so Objektives wie die Erkenntnistheorie, was nicht gegebenenfalls einen sozialen Stellenwert, eine Funktion in der Gesellschaft annehem könnte, die es in das Gegenteil dessen verwandelt, als was es sich selbst ursprünglich einmal gewußt hat', T. W. Adorno, *Philosophische Elemente einer Theorie der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2008), 104 [trans. AB].

is a candidate for truth-determinacy, and that ultimately everything will be explicable in nomological terms.[28] Dieter Henrich has referred to what can 'hold together a world in thought',[29] and this idea is incomprehensible in reductionist terms: the notion of a 'world' as a context of sense is not the same as a system of necessary laws.[30] The latter can be explained and manipulated to an ever greater degree, but without our location in the former the point of such explanation and manipulation is simply absent.

The move of music towards the kind of philosophical significance it gains from the time of Kant onwards is only one, albeit vital and underestimated, facet of the wider realisation that resources for making sense of a disenchanted world have to do with the exploration of other ways in which we relate, as part of nature, to non-human nature. The enduring significance of the great music of the classical tradition, the centrality of music of all kinds for making sense for large parts of the world's population, and the constant demand for musical innovation that sustains the best contemporary music seem to me to be philosophically of considerable significance, but *not* as phenomena primarily to be explained in philosophical or other discursive terms. As I have argued elsewhere,[31] it is, in many contexts, a mistake to think that music is best approached as a philosophical mystery, as it standardly is by philosophers of music, or as a physical or psychological phenomenon, as it is in natural scientific disciplines. To very many of those engaging with it, the primary aspect of music is not puzzlement as to why it seems to matter, or what it means, or how it is to be explained: that puzzlement arises through attempts at objectification of music that do not take account of the fact that objectification is not the only way to make sense of things. Instead, the most significant aspects of music are experienced by participants as ways of connecting to what we are of a kind that are precisely lacking in some of the discursive forms that dominate much of life in modernity.

If German Idealism has to do with healing the rift between mind and world, it is arguable that music offers a vital clue as to why more analytically oriented versions of philosophy signally fail to have much wider social and cultural impact in this respect. The discursive explanation of natural phenomena is more and more exclusively the domain of the natural sciences, and this makes certain kinds of disenchantment irreversible. The contemporary situation in philosophy, where the production of incompatible epistemological theories in great quantities contrasts with the production of significant consensuses and technical successes in the physical sciences, indicates why modern philosophy's concern should be more with A. W. Moore's idea of metaphysics as sense-making, and making sense of making sense. This concern should, in my view, include reflection on the growing awareness of the

questionable status of philosophy as the production of positive argumentative claims in epistemology, ethics, metaphysics, etc.[32]

The Idealist and early Romantic awareness of the modern dynamic of negation, in which positive claims are regarded as both ineluctable – the very propositional nature of much of linguistic communication makes this the case – and fallible and transient, suggests the need for forms of sense that do not conjure away negativity and transience, but incorporate them at the same time as using them to generate new sense that, albeit temporarily, transcends that negativity and transience. Music sometimes achieves this kind of sense in ways that affect human culture more effectively than philosophy, not least because of its combination of the intellectual and the somatic. This links it to the making of cognitive sense and to our embodied nature, as well as articulating new forms of temporality that sustain sense precisely by the use of differing qualities of passing time. The fact that music is inseparable from so many collective practices, central to people's affective world, and has the perennial potential to challenge and restructure aspects of how we relate to our world both in mental and physical terms suggests just how much it is essential to making sense of what we are and what we do. The view presented here is not intended as a wholesale rejection of what still dominates the agenda of so much academic philosophy, but rather as an appeal for a reflection on the focus of philosophy, of the kind that happened in those elements of German Idealism that begin the deconstruction of ontotheology. The idea here is that reflexive philosophical attempts to make sense of negation, that form the core of German Idealism in this respect, should be inseparable from the 'therapeutic' realisation that music may already be able to make the kind of sense of negativity that is left to us in a world after what Adorno calls the 'fall of metaphysics'. How this kind of sense-making can be more effectively related to the lack of meaning caused by those aspects of modern life against which the best of German Idealism was a reaction is a key task for contemporary philosophy.

## Notes

1. For reasons of space, and because I am more concerned to suggest the impact of music in relation to Idealism, I have not provided very much textual evidence, concentrating rather on exploring the implications of the ideas. The textual back-up for what I say can be found in A. Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: from Kant to Nietzsche* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); A. Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
2. C. Dahlhaus, *Klassische und romantische Musikästhetik* (Laaber: Laaber, 1988), 86.
3. *Ibid.*, 99.

4. A. W. Moore, *The Evolution of Modern Metaphysics: making sense of things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
5. Cited in M. Bauer and D. O. Dahlstrom, *The Emergence of German Idealism* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 62.
6. The complex relationship between early Romantic and Idealist philosophy cannot concern us here. See A. Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: the philosophy of German literary theory* (London: Routledge, 1997); Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*; Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity*; M. Frank, *'Unendliche Annäherung'. Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997), for explorations of the difference, which has to do with whether philosophy can make the relation between being and thought transparent.
7. This is the way Herder frames the issue of language and reason in his essay on the 'Origin of Language'.
8. C. Dahlhaus, *Die Idee der absoluten Musik* (Munich: dtv, 1978). See also J. Neubauer, *The Emancipation of Music from Language: departure from mimesis in eighteenth-century aesthetics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986); Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*; Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity*.
9. See A. Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1993); Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*.
10. I suggest in *Adorno and the Ends of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013) that much of Adorno is to be understood in terms of the issue of nature as outlined here.
11. See Robert Brandom, *Reason in Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
12. A. Wellmer, 'On Spirit as a Part of Nature', *Constellations* 16(2) (2009), 220.
13. I do not discuss Schopenhauer's version of this response here as I do not find it philosophically convincing: see Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity* for the reasons.
14. F. W. J. Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling, I Abtheilung, vols. 1–10, II Abtheilung, vols. 1–4 (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856–61), I/7, 331–416.
15. Schelling's later philosophy involves a growing realisation that this is the case: see A. Hutter, *Geschichtliche Vernunft. Die Weiterführung der Kantischen Vernunftkritik in der Spätphilosophie Schellings* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1996).
16. On this in detail: see Bowie, *Music, Philosophy, and Modernity*.
17. It is Adorno who most successfully shows how this dialectic works. See Bowie, *Adorno and the Ends of Philosophy*.
18. I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B 131–2.
19. J. Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover, 1980), 149.
20. D. Henrich, *Konzepte* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1987), 61.
21. R. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); T. Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: the sociality of reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
22. On the relation between metaphysical and non-metaphysical readings, see P. Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
23. R. Pippin, 'After Hegel: an Interview with Robert Pippin', 2001; available online at: http://platypus1917.org/2011/06/01/after-hegel-an-interview-with-robert-pippin.

24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. As Weber makes clear, individual sense is often made by efforts to expand scientific knowledge. The sense does not, though, come from the knowledge itself, but rather from the motivation that leads to someone devoting themselves to its pursuit, even though, as Weber also suggests, such knowledge will ultimately be superseded.
27. See Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*; Bowie, *Music*, *Philosophy*, *and Modernity*.
28. The objections to this kind of reduction were already devastatingly set out by Dewey in *Experience and Nature*.
29. Henrich, *Konzepte*, 76.
30. See M. Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology: studies in German Idealism* (London: Continuum, 2011).
31. See Bowie, *Music*, *Philosophy*, *and Modernity*.
32. See Bowie, *Adorno and the Ends of Philosophy*.

10

# 'Refiner of all human relations': Karl Friedrich Schinkel as an Idealist theorist

Felix Saure

## 1. The Texts of a Visual Artist

Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781–1841) is mostly known as an architect. But he was also a writer on architecture, and although he too primarily viewed himself as a practitioner, his role as a theoretician also served to bolster his confidence.[1] The theoretical foundation of his work was important to him; he gave great attention to studying the texts of others as well as to writing his own. At the same time, Schinkel's 'Theory' is not a coherent and worked-out system, but is rather a collection of short texts from various contexts: official documents, journal entries, letters, notes on general theoretical problems. The question of what the comprehensive theoretical work that Schinkel announced in his lifetime might have looked like, remains unanswered today. This question is, however, not merely a matter of philological detail. We do not even know whether Schinkel would have chosen for the theoretical work he never produced the format of a traditional architectural textbook or whether he would have adopted a framework of dialogues and fragmentary drafts.[2]

Incomplete and fragmentary though the theoretical work is that Schinkel left behind, the range of its allusions outside the realm of architecture is very varied. Schinkel's texts touch not only on the actual theory of architecture, but also take up wider questions of cultural criticism, general aesthetics, the philosophy of history, national culture and educational theory. In this, Schinkel's œuvre – his works of art as well as his theory – is both a component and a result of the network of ideas that made up German Idealism in general and their realisation in 'Berliner Klassik' in particular.

While Schinkel's buildings and paintings are in this context both aesthetically and technologically avant-garde, his writing and thought regarding art,

history and culture are characterised by a multiplicity of 'interfaces' rather than by originality.[3] They re-combine elements diffused throughout the cultural network of the period around 1800.[4]

Schinkel agrees with his contemporaries in one basic idea, recently formulated by Andreas Kilb on the occasion of the great Berlin Schinkel Exhibition: 'the impulse which drove him to the drawing board is the same as that of the philosophers of German Idealism – to organize the world anew by means of *Geist*, to give it form and rules'.[5] In the catalogue of a different Schinkel exhibition – in the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1991 – Peter Betthausen went further: 'A typical representative of German Idealism [sic], Schinkel was inspired by the belief that he could change society, as it were from the head down.'[6] Here, Schinkel is not merely close to the Idealists, but his general attitude makes him one of them.

This focus on the power of *Geist*, which Schiller (for example) claimed for both of them in his final letter to Wilhelm von Humboldt,[7] should not, in the context of Prussia around 1800, be equated with an unworldly distance from social reality.[8] Humboldt did not emigrate to an isolated world of ideas, but rather as section leader in the Ministry of the Interior, as a diplomat and as a political adviser, he secured for his ideas an extensive cultural influence. The same is true for Fichte the public speaker, or for Hegel as rector of the progressive new University of Berlin. The architect Schinkel used his 'empire of ideas'[a] to ground his edifices theoretically – it was never for him a retreat from reality, but rather the counterpoint to his worldly structures of stone and mortar.

My aim here is to examine some areas of Schinkel's 'empire of ideas', and specifically the conceptual models that determined his thought about art, history and culture.[9] The main focus of the analysis lies in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, for it was then that Schinkel gave particularly detailed consideration to the historical, philosophical, political and aesthetic foundations of his architectural projects.

## II. The autonomy of the architect and the moral refinement of humanity

The range of thinkers and artists with whom Schinkel engaged was as wide as his understanding of architecture. Schinkel did not limit himself to

a. 'Reich der Ideen.' Goerd Peschken, *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: Das Architektonische Lehrbuch*, Karl Friedrich Schinkel-Lebenswerk 14 (reprint of 1979 edn) (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2001), 32.

communication and cooperation with other architects, and certainly did not see himself as a mere master builder. This self-understanding was simultaneously an element and a result in a phase of architectural theory in which in Germany – as Hanno-Walter Kruft in his *Geschichte der Architekturtheorie* writes – 'philosophy and aesthetics . . . took a position on architecture with a decisiveness not known prior to this point and this . . . had an effect, in turn, on theory'.[10]

For Schinkel, the architect never limited himself simply to the actual building. Rather, his texts document a broad understanding of the task of an artist; Schinkel saw himself as the 'refiner of all human relations'.[b] Although in this context he speaks only of various 'arts', Schinkel does not mean merely aesthetic 'relations' – as is shown from the context of his work as a whole. Schinkel undoubtedly created, or at least initiated, through his own works and those of his students, a 'corporate design' for the Prussia of the early nineteenth century. Theodor Fontane argues in the *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg* that until 1860 one lived in a 'world of Schinkel-style forms'.[c] However, the 'refining' meant by Schinkel was more than a mere aesthetic beautification, it was also and primarily thought of as moral improvement – with all the facets that this concept implies in the time around 1800. At another point, Schinkel says of the connection between 'truth' and 'freedom', 'reason' and 'beauty':

> Feeling for the highest truth, freedom of conscience, is brought about through education in the rational and the beautiful, and the perfected rational man is at the same time beautiful . . . fine art has a moral effect . . . freedom of feeling in general is the task of a rational education – through specific images, and in the most particular case through the application of the fine arts.[d]

Not only in this passage, but also in many other texts it becomes apparent how Schinkel's self-understanding as an architect differs from the vocational

b. 'Veredler aller menschlichen Verhältnisse.' Hans Mackowsky (ed.), *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: Briefe, Tagebücher, Gedanken* (Frankfurt a.M.: Propyläen, 1981), 192 [All translations, unless otherwise noted, are by PS].

c. 'Welt Schinkelscher Formen.' Theodor Fontane, *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg*, Werke, Schriften und Briefe, 2. Abt., 3 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002), I, 107–29, 118.

d. 'Gefühl für höchste Wahrheit, Freiheit des Gewissens wird durch Erziehung im Vernünftigen u[nd] Schönen erzeugt u[nd] der vollendet Vernünftige ist zugleich schön . . . Die schöne Kunst wirkt zurück auf das Moralische. Freiheit der Empfindung überhaupt ist Aufgabe der vernünftigen Erziehung und durch bestimmte Bilder u[nd] im speciellsten Falle mit der Anwendung der schönen Kunst.' Peschken, *Schinkels Lehrbuch*, 27.

picture and ethos of previous generations. The Berlin Academy of Architecture, opened in 1799, where Schinkel also studied, offered training that was primarily technologically oriented, much like that of an engineer.[11] A change is hinted at in an essay by the young architect Friedrich Gilly, a friend of Schinkel, who received part of his training from Gilly's father. Gilly warns against architects' specialisation and pleads for a universal 'totality of [the architect's] training or studies'.[e] He criticises an understanding of architecture that based itself only upon mathematics, peaking in an era of textbooks, in which 'even "the problem of taste"' could be solved in an 'appendix'.[f] The consequence is said to have been a 'pernicious *one-sidedness*, not to say division' of art and science in the architecture.[g] Gilly closes his short manifesto with a call for the state to support architecture. At the same time, the 'general education' of the 'public' must be promoted, in order to create '*receptivity* to excellence, grandeur, and beauty'.[h]

Such a critique of the role of architects and the demand for a 'universal education' are, in the period around 1800, nothing less than the expression of a claim to autonomy. The architect-artist is designing himself a new role for the modern era. Only an 'educated' artist is capable of initiating, in a theoretically grounded manner, a step that, around 1800, meant a paradigm shift: giving autonomy to architecture and dissolving the system of predetermined models.[12] This new self-understanding of Schinkel's links him to Friedrich Gilly's pointed expression of principles. In his buildings he was giving concrete form not just to specific architectural ideas, but also to the idea of the autonomous architect-artist.

## III. Cultural critique and the philosophy of history

As a consequence, architecture is merely *one* element in the general historical development described by Schinkel's theoretical writings. His

e. 'Bildung', Friedrich Gilly, 'Einige Gedanken über die Notwendigkeit, die verschiedenen Theile der Baukunst, in wissenschaftlicher und praktischer Hinsicht, möglichst zu vereinigen', ed. Fritz Neumeyer, *Friedrich Gilly: Essays zur Architektur 1796–1799* (Berlin: Ernst & Sohn, 1997), 178–87, at 182; Friedrich Gilly, 'Some thoughts on the necessity of endeavoring to unify the various departments of architecture in both theory and practice', *Friedrich Gilly: essays on architecture 1796–1799*, ed. Fritz Neumeyer, trans. David Britt (texts and documents) (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994), 165–72, at 168.

f. *Ibid.*, 169; Zeit der Lehrbücher . . . selbst das Geschmacksproblem . . . ', Gilly, 'Einige Gedanken', 183.

g. Gilly, 'Some thoughts', 169; 'Höchst schädliche *Einseitigkeit*, und häufig selbst *Trennung*', Gilly, 'Einige Gedanken', 183.

h. Gilly, 'Some thoughts', 171–2; '[A]llgemeine *Bildung des Publikums* . . . *Empfänglichkeit* für das Bessere, für das Große und Schöne . . . ', Gilly, 'Einige Gedanken', 185.

understanding of architecture is affected in important ways by overarching considerations of general aesthetics, the philosophy of history and also politics. Schinkel's writing did not remain on a descriptive and analytical level, but his ideas and conclusions are clearly infused with cultural critique. Implicitly, or even directly, Schinkel demands an art and an aesthetics that will overcome or relativise the marked deficiencies of the present, so that art should have 'a moral effect'.[13] The phenomena that Schinkel perceived to be problematic depend on the relevant historical situation: current political developments as well as longer-term economic, social and even media-historical developments all come in for critique.

In a partially published essay of 1810 – written, therefore, at a point when Napoleon had significantly changed the manner in which war was waged and had begun to re-shape a great deal of Europe politically, legally and socially – Schinkel writes of the 'maladies of the age'.[i] His suggestions for aesthetic reform in a national spirit – which will be discussed below – are a part of the Prussian project 'by the means of *Geist* to compensate for the loss of military and political power'.[14] Through educational, military, social and administrative reforms between October 1807 (emancipation of serfs) and 1812 (emancipation of Jews), attempts were made to realise this idea. With his politically tendentious architectural designs, Schinkel aspired to be a part of the project.[15] Marked points of critique can be found in two memoranda that Schinkel wrote in 1814 and 1815.[16] In them, he expands upon his plan for a 'Cathedral of Liberation' in Berlin, to serve as a memorial to the victory over Napoleon. Schinkel here criticises not only past trends in architecture, but also the general social context.

Schinkel's idea is that the construction of a large cathedral will elevate human beings and make them morally better by removing them from the 'day-to-day turbulence and busyness' and 'humdrum workaday atmosphere' that characterises existence in the city.[j] The cathedral to be built thus is never to be endangered by 'unworthy additions from the common traffic of the alleyways'.[k] Schinkel therefore does not perceive the city positively as pluralistic and potentially egalitarian; it is not the free daily encounters of early bourgeois and capitalist individuals that define his picture of the

i. 'Gebrechen der Zeit', Karl Friedrich Schinkel, 'Entwurf zu einer Begräbnißkapelle für Ihre Majestät die Hochselige Königin Luise von Preußen', in Alfred Freiherr von Wolzogen (ed.), *Aus Schinkel's Nachlaß: Reisetagebücher, Briefe und Aphorismen*, 3 vols. (reprint of Berlin 1862/3 edn) (Mittenwald: Mäander, 1981), III, 153.

j. 'Alltäglichen Gewühl und Treiben . . . dumpfe Tagwerksgeschäftigkeit', *Ibid.*, 190.

k. 'Unwürdigen Anbaue des gemeinen Verkehrs der Gassen', *Ibid.*, 202.

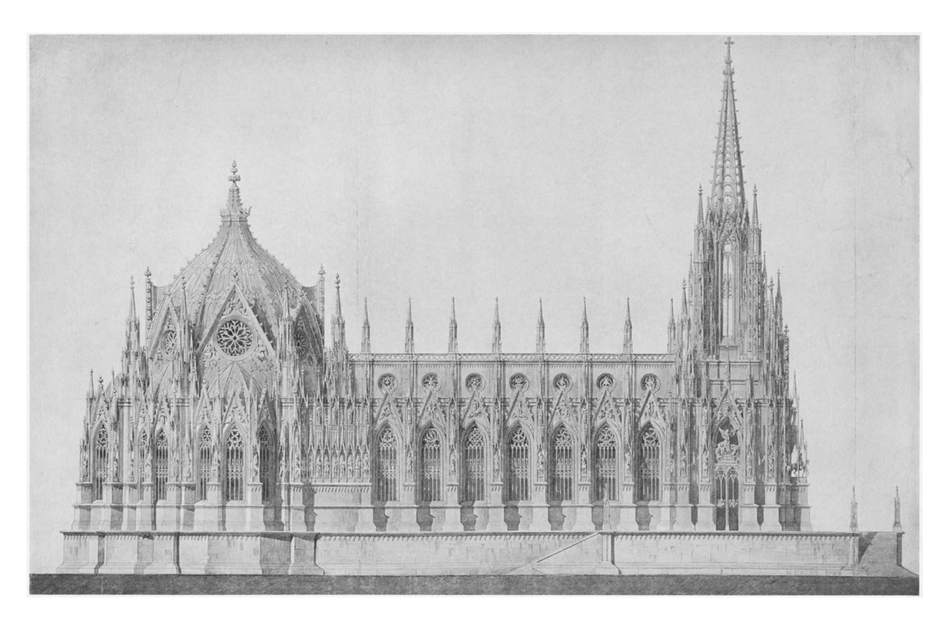


Figure 10.1 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *Print from a draft for a cathedral as a monument to the Wars of Liberation*, 1815. 60.7 × 40.5 cm, Inv. No. 15421, Architekturmuseum der Technischen Universität Berlin in the Universitätsbibliothek.

Prussian metropolis. Instead, it is his task to mitigate a modernity perceived as fragmented and fragmenting, and its 'moral' problems.[17]

This criticism of modernity is also developed in another direction. Schinkel laments the loss of the 'old master-craftsman attitude',[l] and he describes this with the same words as in 1810: he speaks of the 'maladies of the time', by which he means the end of a personal, all-embracing craftsmanship and the beginning of a modern, de-personalised division of labour. He counters by projecting the construction of the Cathedral of Liberation as an act of resistance 'to the modern spirit of haste, by means of peace and order'.[m,18]

In a general theoretical draft, which can be dated to around 1830, Schinkel continues his cultural critique of the present. The issue now is what he sees as a dangerous development in media and consumption. Schinkel, whom his son-in-law and early biographer Alfred von Wolzogen describes as very well read,[19] objects to the 'mass of art journals and art collections'.[n,20] A note,

l. '[Der] alte, werkmeisterliche sinn', *Ibid.*, 200.
m. 'Gegen den Sinn der Uebereilung in der neueren Zeit, mit Ruhe und Ordnung', *Ibid.*, 199f.
n. 'Masse artistischer Journale und Sammlungen', Peschken, *Schinkels Lehrbuch*, 115.

probably written at the same time, contains a critique of 'exaggerated refinement of external appearance', which is called 'barbarous'.[o] Even 'fashion' is for him a 'foolish whim, a sign of a lack of freedom and education' and in sum again, 'barbarism'.[p] Schinkel's focus is thus upon the high frequency of innovations, which in his opinion corresponds to a surrender of solidity and a disregard for the uniquely individual – whether through continually new forms of fashion or the multiplication of news and newspapers.

Concrete and critical observations on modernity can also be found in the notes from Schinkel's travels in western Europe, for he visited France and Great Britain in 1826. In Paris, for example, he is impressed by the art of the Parisian bronze-founder Charles Crozatier, which was so far developed that 'no *ciselure* is necessary, a few extremely fine seams, and a great lightness and economy are the notable characteristics'.[21] While praising the technology, he nevertheless criticises Parisian bronze products in general as 'stiff and dreadfully repetitive'.[q] They are for Schinkel aesthetically anything but innovative. The journal entries from Great Britain also contain many excited passages about the industrialised country – Schinkel saw iron-chain bridges, early railways and modern factories and experienced the system of Scottish steamship travel.[22] These positive impressions are also accompanied by critical remarks: from Manchester, where there was worker unrest due to overproduction and unemployment in 1826, Schinkel writes to his wife regarding the economic and social situation: 'One doubts very much what might come about from these fearful conditions.'[r] In Birmingham, he criticises the architecture in which the new developments are expressed. Thus, Schinkel finds fault with the 'most sorrowful' monotony of this 'English factory city', which can boast only 'utterly uninteresting houses of red brick for 120,000 inhabitants'.[s] His description of the ephemeral character of workers' housing and factories in Manchester is similar:

> one sees buildings standing where three years before there were still fields, but these buildings are so blackened by smoke that they appear

o. 'Überfeine äußere Bildung . . . Barbarei', *Ibid.*, 117.

p. 'Mode . . . unvernünftiger Einfall, Zeichen von Mangel an Freiheit u[nd] Bildung . . . Barbarei', *Ibid.*, 26.

q. '[D]ies' steife Zeug . . . repitiert [sic] sich so entsetzlich.' Winfried Baer, 'Karl Friedrich Schinkels Tafelaufsatz-Entwürfe im Rahmen ihrer europäischen Konkurrenz und sein Zusammenwirken mit der Bronzefabrik Werner und Mieth bzw. Werner & Neffen in Berlin', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* NF 47 (2005), 159–94, at 163.

r. 'Man ist sehr in Zweifel, was aus diesem furchtbaren Zustande der Dinge werden soll', Riemann, *Schinkel: Reise nach England*, 252.

s. 'Höchst traurig der Anblick einer solchen englischen Fabrikstadt . . . Ganz uninteressante Häuser in rotem Backstein für 120 000 Einwohner.' *Ibid.*, 187.



Figure 10.2 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *Manchester. Cotton mills. View of a block of riverside factories*, pen-and-ink sketch in the *Diary of a Journey to England*, 17 July 1826. From: Wolzogen, *Schinkel's Nachlass*, III, 114.

> as if they had been in use for a hundred years . . . It makes a terribly sinister impression: monstrous massive constructions put up just by a foreman without any architecture, simply for the most basic needs, in red brick.[t]

In a summary note which can be dated to around 1830, he writes: 'the modern age (England) makes everything easy, it no longer believes in anything that lasts'.[u] Seen in the light of this all-embracing cultural criticism, the extent of Schinkel's ambition to be a 'refiner of all human relations' is more understandable.

Schinkel's critique of the negatively diversifying power of the metropolis and also of the destructive violence of divided-labour processes is not original. His comments reflect fundamental cultural-critical concerns that appear to be typical of German experience in the early nineteenth century: the fear of uncontrollable and increasingly rapid change and social as well as individual alienation and fragmentation. Technological progress has negative side-effects, which already foreshadow aspects of the 'Dialectic of Enlightenment'. Goethe refers to what he experienced as the excessive haste typical of the age as 'velociferal'.[v,23] Three decades earlier, in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*,[24] Schiller had already invoked both anthropology and the

t. '[M]an sieht die Gebäude stehn, wo vor drei Jahren noch Wiesen waren, aber diese Gebäude sehn so schwarz geräuchert aus, als wären sie hundert Jahr in Gebrauch. – Es macht einen schrecklich unheimlichen Eindruck: ungeheure Baumassen von nur Werkmeistern ohne Architektur und fürs nackteste Bedürfnis allein und aus rotem Backstein aufgeführt', *Ibid.*, 244.

u. 'Die neue Zeit (England) macht alles leicht, es / sie / glaubt gar nicht mehr an ein bestehendes.' Peschken, *Schinkels Lehrbuch*, 70.

v. 'Veloziferisch.' For Goethe's analysis and critique of modernity see, for example, Max Hecker, *Briefwechsel zwischen Goethe und Zelter*, 3 vols. (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel, 1987), II, 374f (Goethe to Zelter, 6 June 1825).

philosophy of history to draw a contrast to an idealised Greece and to sketch out the problematic situation of modern humanity. Wilhelm von Humboldt – a friend of Schiller and an acquaintance of Schinkel – also returned at various points in his work to the problems of fragmentation, accelerating change and alienation.[25]

Schinkel too expressed a trenchant critique of the social, aesthetic, economic, political and personal effects of a modernity understood as threatening. At the same time, he is also a 'special case' in that he continually had recourse to new technologies and materials in his practical work. He brought Portland cement and other new building materials back to Prussia from his trip to England.[26] For the erection of the *Schlossbrücke* – the most prominent bridge in the centre of Berlin, decorated with heroic statues in an antique style – a steam engine was used, as Heinrich Heine mentions *en passant* in his *Letters from Berlin*.[27] In a memorandum of 1838 Schinkel, now *Oberbaurat*, engages with the new challenge of constructing a railway system and its stations.[28] In 1820, he recommended copying and trialling in Prussia a new-style mechanical digger, which had been invented in Boston.[29] Despite the socially harmonious tone of his rhetoric as a whole, Schinkel pleads explicitly for a functional, modern division of labour for the Cathedral of Liberation, where 'invention', 'construction' and 'calculation' are to be undertaken separately.[30] We thus cannot assume Schinkel was remote from, or even hostile to, technological modernity, despite his clear cultural critique.

Schinkel's critique of culture and his concepts for reform are bound up with a philosophy of history that gives a special role to art. In his understanding of human development, Schinkel assumes a general progression in history as a whole. The history of architecture is for Schinkel a part of universal history and also part of the history of progress. In the period around 1800 these basic assumptions could not be taken for granted, for the understanding of the history of architecture was strongly influenced by the idea of degeneration. A theory of architecture as a basis for constructing exemplary buildings could, in this view, only be a commentary on and exegesis of canonical works, primarily those of Vitruvius, Palladio and Alberti.[31] Schinkel contrasts with this position the concept that history necessarily unfolds dynamically.

In this model of thought a prime role is given to aesthetic experience. In art, the onward dynamic of history can be experienced immediately, for it is in art that a new era first hints at its onset.[32] Also, according to Schinkel, access to the past is best sought through art: in works of art, the dominant ideas of past epochs are more easily recognised than they are (for instance) in

works of history.[33] Altogether Schinkel values art and aesthetic experience much more than other ways of apprehending the world, such as science and scholarship[34] and the verbal discourse associated with them.[35] Schinkel envisages a philosophy of history in which art and aesthetic experience have the role of *avantgarde* when he writes:

> it would perhaps be the ultimate perfection of a new procedural method for the world, if fine art were to take the lead, just as in science the experiment precedes the discovery, which can be seen as the distinguishing characteristic of modernity.[w]

If we look at a particular project, we can see, by way of example, how, on the basis of his critique of present culture and his Idealist philosophy of history, Schinkel develops an understanding of architecture and society that goes beyond a mere definition of the beautiful and aims 'to refine all human relations'.

## IV. History, art and Volk: 'a polemic against the Germans' and the call to creativity

In 1810, Schinkel presented a number of works at an exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts in Berlin. Among them were drawings for a memorial to the Prussian Queen Luise, who died young but had become a much-respected sovereign.[36] Schinkel's design was not built.

At the exhibition, Schinkel showed not only pictures he had painted, but also explained his designs in a text that was also partially printed in the exhibition catalogue.[37] The essay, which Robson-Scott calls 'one of the most fascinating documents of the Gothic Revival in Germany', is extremely dense theoretically.[38] Within the text, Schinkel formulates the ideas, both aesthetic and political, which significantly determined his work at the time of the Napoleonic occupation and the so-called Wars of Liberation. Not only the plan for the mausoleum for Luise, but also that for the Cathedral of Liberation are based on them.

Apart from the commentary on the design itself, three factors determine the content of the essay: a progressive understanding of history, which suggests a particular hierarchy of epochs; a 'polemic against the Germans',

w. 'Es wäre vielleicht, die höchste Blüthe einer neuen Handlungsweise der Welt[,] wenn die schöne Kunst voran ginge, etwa so wie das Experiment in der Wissenschaft der Entdeckung vorher geht, und als ein eigenthümliches Element der neuen Zeit angesehn werden kann.' Peschken, *Schinkels Lehrbuch*, 71.

influenced by cultural critique; and, finally, a call for the renewal of aesthetics in the national spirit.

In the essay on the mausoleum for Queen Luise, the model of an unconditionally progressive course of history, sketched above, is connected to the idea of a ranking of central historical epochs. The criterion for the evaluation – according to the idea of continuous historical advance – is the ability of an epoch to innovate. This is manifest primarily in its aesthetic and artistic originality. Schinkel begins his analysis with ancient Greece, to which he ascribes the 'highest . . . culture'[x] – a characterisation that he repeats frequently in other places in his work.[39] The particular excellence of ancient Hellas is the 'progressive advance of . . . culture in general'.[y] This dynamic does not, however, lead to an unlimited variety of developments, but a principle of harmony is always intrinsically present. Unlike the modernity he criticises, which constantly makes 'everything easy' and in doing so only creates the ephemeral, Hellas was a 'world of art sufficient unto itself'.[z] Elsewhere, Schinkel summarises the equilibrium of progression and inner unity in Hellas. In ancient Greece, he claims, there prevailed 'the most fortunate condition of freedom under law'.[aa]

The epoch that followed Greece in the course of history, Rome, is also characterised by Schinkel as innovative. In his mausoleum essay he ascribes the invention of the full-centre arch to the Roman age.[40] However, in Schinkel's eyes, the technological competence required for this innovation does not justify giving Rome an exemplary ranking. Rather, the essay continues: 'This invention was the work of a nation which had received its entire artistic culture from the Greeks, and had little creative originality in itself.'[bb] Thus, Rome is denied 'true' progressiveness. Rome was merely able to take up individual elements of Greek life and to develop them further. The Romans did not succeed in taking history forward into a new epoch of unitary character. Instead, the Roman age remained a phase in which many things stood unconnected alongside one another. That which was taken from the Greeks was at best added to without understanding, but never integrated harmoniously into a new concept. This belittling of Rome is a common theme in Schinkel's work.[41]

x. 'Höchst[e] . . . Cultur', Schinkel, 'Entwurf zu einer Begräbnißkapelle', 157.
y. 'Progressive Fortgang der . . . Cultur im Allgemeinen', Peschken, *Schinkels Lehrbuch*, 29.
z. 'In sich geschlossene Kunstwelt', *Ibid.*, 57.
aa. 'Der glücklichste FreiheitsZustand im Gesetz', *Ibid.*
bb. 'Diese Erfindung ward von einer Nation aufgefaßt, die ihre ganze Kunstbildung von den Griechen erhalten und wenig ursprünglich Schöpferisches hatte.' Schinkel, 'Entwurf zu einer Begräbnißkapelle', 156.

The fundamental flaw of the Romans was their lack of 'freedom'. Freedom had made it possible for the Greeks not only to create something new, but to integrate it harmoniously into the existing structures. In contrast, Rome: 'did not know how to deploy [the sciences and arts taken over from the Greeks] with the freedom they need and demand'.[cc] Schinkel denies the Romans a creative power of their own. With this devaluing of the Romans, Schinkel's argument was in full conformity with contemporary thinking. The primacy of Hellas over Rome had determined the German reception of antiquity since Winckelmann;[42] and Wilhelm von Humboldt was one protagonist of this view in the age of Idealism.[43] Humboldt further developed the hierarchy of epochs that had existed since Winckelmann, ascribing to the Germans a special and unique relationship with the Greeks. Because Greece functions in Humboldt's thought variously as an aesthetic, political and anthropological model, the Germans – by virtue of their exclusive relation to the Greeks – become a world-historical *avant garde*: it is the task of the Germans to overcome the conflicts and antagonisms of modernity through a renewal of Greek culture. France, by contrast, is devalued, for France has declared itself the inheritor of Rome, and so has taken only second-class antiquity as its model.

This intellectual schema, which decisively influenced the definition of the German national and cultural identity around 1800, was extended by Schinkel, around 1810, so as to include one more epoch. The political implications were unchanged, but a parallel was created to an ideological tenet of another Idealist – Fichte.

Around 1810, Schinkel ascribes an important role in world history to the Middle Ages; at the same time he defines the Middle Ages as a German epoch. In the Middle Ages, according to this view, Germans proved themselves a creative community and, as such, took on a trail-blazing role in universal history. The expression of their creative power was Gothic art and architecture, with which the Germans helped to express the new idea of Christianity – understood here primarily in terms of the philosophy of history, rather than of religion.

> But the idea of Christianity, creating something altogether new and raising the whole of humanity to an entirely new stage . . . finally [in the Middle Ages] took hold of a truly original people [*Urvolk*], the Germans, who, far from giving themselves over to the influences of

cc. 'Diese Nation wußte nicht, sich derselben . . . mit derjenigen Freiheit zu bedienen, welche dieselbe will und haben soll', *Ibid.*, 156–7.

> antiquity, though adopting earlier forms, brought into being, out of their own sense of freedom, their own distinctive world of the spirit and of life.[dd]

Although Schinkel does not further define this 'original people' here, one can assume that he is using the concept to refer to a nation that is both creator and first representative of an innovative epoch in world history.

With this identification of the Germans as a creative and self-aware community, Schinkel takes up both the content and the terminology of a passage from the seventh of Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation* (*Reden an die deutsche Nation*). Here, Fichte writes:

> All who either live creatively, bringing forth the new themselves, or, should this not have fallen to their lot, at least decisively abandon things of vanity and keep watch to see whether somewhere they will be caught by the stream of original life . . . all these are original men; they are, when viewed as a people, an original people, the people as such: Germans. All who resign themselves to being secondary and derivative . . . are an echo resounding from the cliff-face, an echo of a voice that has already fallen silent; they are, viewed as a people, outside the original people and strangers and foreigners unto it.[ee]

Fichte defined his 'original people' not biologically or racially, but in terms of the philosophy of history. In the broader context of the *Addresses to the German Nation* he explains that it is particularly the linguistic endowment of the Germans that grounds their character as 'original men', and thus their position as the *avant garde* in world history.[44]

dd. 'Aber die durchaus Neues schaffende und die gesammte Menschheit auf eine ganz andere Stufe setzende Idee des Christenthums . . . bemächtigte sich . . . endlich eines wahren Urvolks, der Deutschen, welches fern davon, sich unbedingt dem Einflusse des Alterthums hinzugeben, aus dem eigenen Freiheitssinne heraus[,] allerdings unter Aufnahme früherer Formen eine eigen geartete Welt des Geistes und Lebens entstehen ließ.' Schinkel, 'Entwurf zu einer Begräbnißkapelle', 157.

ee. 'Alle, die entweder selbst, schöpferisch, und hervorbringend das Neue, leben, oder, die, falls ihnen dies nicht zuteil geworden wäre, das Nichtige wenigstens entschieden fallen lassen, und aufmerkend dastehen, ob irgendwo der Fluß ursprünglichen Lebens sie ergreifen werde . . . alle diese sind ursprüngliche Menschen, sie sind, wenn sie als ein Volk betrachtet werden, ein Urvolk, das Volk schlechtweg, Deutsche. Alle, die sich darein ergeben ein Zweites zu sein, und Abgestammtes . . . sind . . . ein vom Felsen zurücktönender Nachhall einer schon verstummten Stimme, sie sind, als Volk betrachtet, außerhalb des Urvolks, und für dasselbe Fremde, und Ausländer.' Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, ed. Reinhard Lauth, 5th edn (Hamburg: Meiner, 1978), 121; Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, ed. Gregory Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 96f.

Schinkel follows Fichte both in his implicit criticism and in his vision for the future. For Schinkel, too, the Germans are a nation whose task is thoroughgoing renewal – a renewal that is not merely German, but potentially world-historical. The precondition for a successful aesthetic and cultural reform is a 'correct' recourse to history: the goal must be to unite the original self to the unfalsified other. Just as Winckelmann had demanded 'imitation' as a creative process and had condemned the 'copy' as something dead, so Schinkel demands that 'the influences of foreign nations' must 'be taken up judiciously'. Otherwise there is the threat of 'characterlessness' and a 'lamentable, imitation life . . . which does not even deserve the name of life'.[ff] Here we can recognise the proximity to Fichte's cultural critique and to his definition of the nation in the *Addresses*, not only in the pattern of thought, but even in the choice of words. One of the best-known – and much misused – passages from the twelfth address runs:

> we must formulate sturdy and unshakeable principles to guide us in our thinking and action; life and thought must be of a piece, a single interpenetrating and solid whole; in both we must become more natural and truthful and cast off foreign artifice. In a word, we must acquire character; for to have character and to be German undoubtedly means the same.[gg]

Schinkel's theses are in a sense the realisation of this requirement in respect of art and aesthetics. At the same time, Schinkel aspires to initiate and accompany a comprehensive reform. As he understands his mission, he must not restrict himself, but must reform the entire environment in which humanity lives.

ff. 'Die Einflüsse fremder Nationen sind nur dann heilsam, wenn sie mit Besonnenheit aufgenommen werden; nur dann thun sie ihre wahre Wirkung, indem sie sich mit den eigenen Eigenthümlichkeiten verschmelzen, während dagegen die gänzliche Verleugnung der letzteren bloß Charakterlosigkeit mit sich bringt und ein jämmerliches nachgeahmtes Leben erzeugt, das nicht einmal Leben genannt zu werden verdient.' Schinkel, 'Entwurf zu einer Begräbniskapelle', 159.

gg. 'Wir müssen uns haltbare und unerschütterliche Grundsätze bilden, die allem unsern übrigen Denken, und unserm Handeln zur festen Richtschnur dienen, Leben und Denken muß bei uns aus einem Stücke sein, und ein sich durchdringendes und gediegenes Ganzes; wir müssen in beiden der Natur und der Wahrheit gemäß werden, und die fremden Kunststücke von uns werfen; wir müssen, um es mit einem Worte zu sagen, uns Charakter anschaffen, denn Charakter haben, und deutsch sein, ist ohne Zweifel gleichbedeutend.' Fichte, *Reden*, 193; *Addresses*, 155.

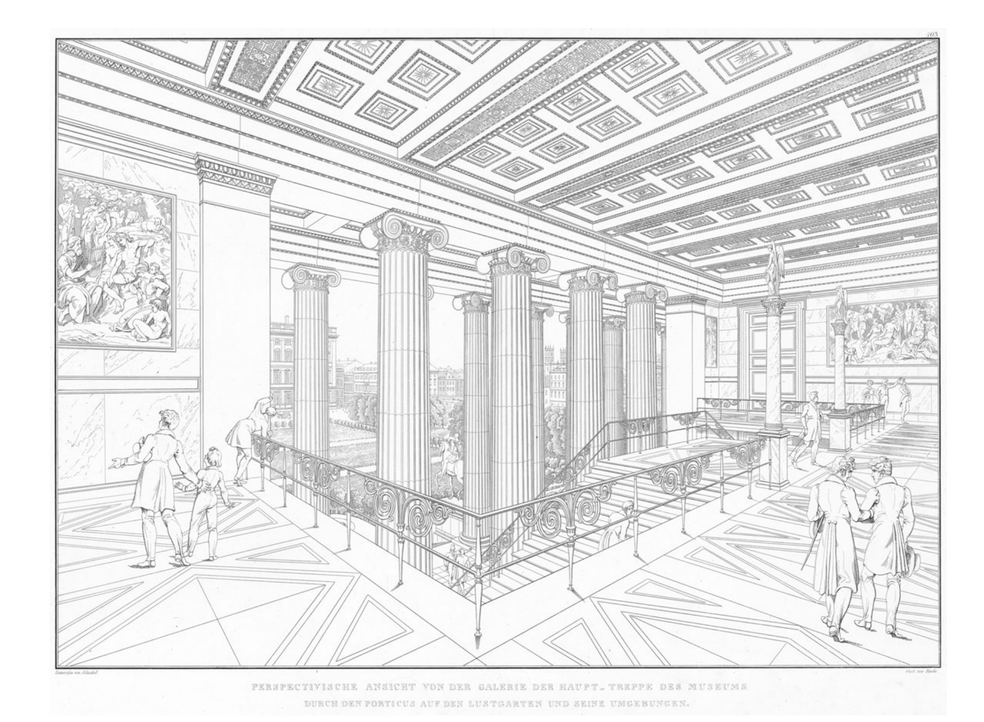



Figure 10.3 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *View from the staircase of the Old Museum, 1830*. Engraving by Hans Fincke from a drawing by Schinkel, 53 × 41.5 cm, published in Schinkel's *Sammlung architektonischer Entwürfe* (Berlin 1819–40, 1858), Inv. No. SAE 1858,103, Architekturmuseum der Technischen Universität Berlin in the Universitätsbibliothek.

## v. Outlooks: on the Old Museum, from the Old Museum

Schinkel's ideas are not limited to the concepts sketched here, which were developed at the time of the wars against Napoleon. In conclusion, we shall look briefly at the changes in Schinkel's later thought. The starting (and vanishing) point is the Old Museum, planned by Schinkel and opened in a central location of the Prussian capital in 1830.[45]

Schinkel retained his fundamental assumptions about the course of history and the role of art and aesthetics for the community. Like the architectural projects already mentioned, the Old Museum was also intended to initiate a fundamental change in the world. However, Schinkel reinterprets the ideas on collective renewal that he had formulated around 1810 in a spirit of nationalism, and shifts the emphasis in his evaluation of historical epochs. In the following decades, the individual plays the central role

for Schinkel. He speaks indirectly of the (national) collective; the individual should educate himself and refine himself morally through aesthetic experience. The epoch that is here the point of reference is Greek antiquity, and the (supposedly) German Middle Ages with their Gothic art no longer play a prominent role for Schinkel in the 1820s and 1830s.

Indirectly – this is the foundational assumption of this Idealist concept – the transformation of the world continues through and in the form of what Schinkel calls the 'cultured State' ('*den gebildeten Staat*'). Such a transformation – also envisaged, for example, by the philosopher Friedrich Schiller in his letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* – would be more lasting and more comprehensive than the 'merely' political upheavals of the bourgeois revolutions. The state, however, does not itself educate into culture, but assumes the role of an 'enabler': the 'cultured state' is to enable the education of the individual – e.g. through the museum in the centre of the capital. If art becomes a significant element of public life in the 'cultured state', then art can – by way of a 'detour' through the cultured individual – unfold its ethical and moral potential for the common good. For Schinkel, 'fine art has a moral effect'.[hh,46] The starting point for this process is the individual, for example, in the form of the museum visitor.[47] The visitor's view from the staircase in the Old Museum, drawn by Schinkel, can be seen as the icon of his understanding of education, art and the state.

Although Schinkel's thought underwent the shifts and reinterpretations indicated here, his assumptions in respect of anthropology, the philosophy of history and the critique of culture remained the same. The architect Schinkel does indeed actively accept the technological side of modernity – but as a reflective theorist of architecture, Schinkel's engagement with the social, economical, political and mental developments in the emergence of a modern, individualist and capitalist bourgeois society was however significantly influenced by patterns of thought that are paradigmatic for the cultural critique offered by German Idealism: the idea that one not only can, but must, counter the negative effects of individualisation, rationalisation, accelerating change and diversification with a harmonious holism and an individual or collective 'education' ('*Bildung*') that leads to it. That the centre of the German capital is even today marked by several prominent structures designed by Schinkel is thus a legacy built not merely out of architectural elements, but also out of the thoughts of German Idealism.

*Translated by Philip Stewart*

hh. 'Die schöne Kunst wirkt zurück auf das Moralische', Peschken, *Schinkels Lehrbuch*, 27.

## Notes

1. See, for example, Alex Potts, 'Schinkel's architectural theory', in Michael Snodin (ed.), *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: a universal man* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 47–55, at 47.
2. For an extended discussion of this problem see my study: *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: Ein deutscher Idealist zwischen 'Klassik' und 'Gotik'* (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2010), 362–9.
3. For Schinkel and Fichte, see Petra Lohmann, *Architektur als Symbol des Lebens: Zur Wirkung der Philosophie Johann Gottlieb Fichtes auf die Architekturtheorie Karl Friedrich Schinkels von 1803 bis 1815* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2010). For Schinkel and Hegel, see an older article by Heinrich Dilly, 'Hegel und Schinkel', in Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert and Otto Pöggeler (eds.), *Welt und Wirkung von Hegels Ästhetik* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1986), 103–16. See Saure, *Karl Friedrich Schinkel* for parallel readings of texts by Schinkel, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Schiller, Altenstein, Winckelmann, Goethe and Fichte.
4. See, for example, Bernhard Maaz, '"Belebt und gefördert": Schinkel im Austausch mit Goethe', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* NF 51 (2009), 111–18, at 112.
5. Andreas Kilb, 'Die Verbesserung der Welt: Große Schinkel-Ausstellung in Berlin', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, 9 September 2012, 24.
6. Peter Betthausen, 'Schinkel: a universal man', in Michael Snodin (ed.), *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: a universal man* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 1–8, at 1f.
7. Schiller to Wilhelm von Humboldt, 2 April 1805, in Siegfried Seidel (ed.), *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Friedrich Schiller und Wilhelm von Humboldt* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1962), II, 267.
8. See, for example, the pointed comments of Gerhard Gamm, *Der Deutsche Idealismus: Eine Einführung in die Philosophie von Fichte, Hegel und Schelling* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1997), 11.
9. In the presentation of conceptual contexts I intentionally refrain from using the word 'reconstruction' in order to avoid the impression that I am presenting a system of thought that, in a certain sense, never existed in a fixed or completed form.
10. Hanno-Walter Kruft, *Geschichte der Architekturtheorie: Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, 4th edn (Munich: Beck, 1995), 331.
11. See Kruft, *Geschichte der Architekturtheorie*, 336. For the importance of the Bauakademie for the education and self-understanding of architects, see also summarily Reinhard Strecke, *Pegasus oder Schinkel und Berlins erster Eisenbahnhof* (Berlin: Transit, 2008), 33–57.
12. Cf. Cord-Friedrich Berghahn, *Das Wagnis der Autonomie: Studien zu Karl Philipp Moritz, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Heinrich Gentz, Friedrich Gilly und Ludwig Tieck*, Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift Beihefte (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012), 365.
13. Goerd Peschken, *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: Das Architektonische Lehrbuch*, Karl Friedrich Schinkel-Lebenswerk 14 (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2001; reprint of 1979 edn), 27.
14. Theodore Ziolkowski, *Berlin: Aufstieg einer Kulturmetropole um 1810* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2002), 9.
15. See Barry Bergdoll, *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: Preußens berühmtester Baumeister* (Munich: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1994), 9.
16. Karl Friedrich Schinkel, 'Ueber das Projekt des Baus einer Cathedrale auf dem Leipziger Platz zu Berlin, als Denkmals [sic] für die Befreiungskriege. A. Schinkel's Bericht hierüber

an den Geheimen Kabinetsrath Albrecht. 1819 [recte 1814]. B. Ein zweiter Aufsatz Schinkel's, denselben Gegenstand betreffend und sicher auch aus derselben Zeit [Anfang 1815]', in Wolzogen, *Schinkel's Nachlass*, III, 188–97, 198–207.

17. See also John E. Toews, 'Building historical and cultural identities in a modernist frame: Karl Friedrich Schinkel's Bauakademie in context', in Mark Micale and Robert Dietle (eds.), *Enlightenment, Passion, Modernity: essays in European thought and culture* (Stanford University Press, 2000), 167–206, fn. pp. 435–8, 171–3.
18. *Ibid.*, 199f.
19. Alfred Freiherr von Wolzogen, 'Schinkel als Architekt, Maler und Kunstphilosoph: Vortrag gehalten im Verein für Geschichte der bildenden Künste zu Breslau', *Zeitschrift für Bauwesen* 14 (1864), cols 61–94 and 219–56, 90.
20. See also a remark by Schinkel's friend, Achim von Arnim, in a letter to Jacob Grimm, Berlin, 21 January 1829, in Reinhold Steig and Herman Grimm (eds.), *Achim von Arnim und die ihm nahestanden* (reprint of 1894–1913 edn) (Bern: Lang, 1970), III, 584.
21. Gottfried Riemann (ed.), *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: Reise nach England, Schottland und Paris im Jahre 1826* (Berlin: Henschel, 1986), 109.
22. Riemann, *Schinkel: Reise nach England*, 235, 257, 261.
23. See Manfred Osten, *'Alles veloziferisch' oder Goethes Entdeckung der Langsamkeit* (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel, 2003).
24. See esp. the sixth letter: Friedrich Schiller, 'Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen', eds. Rolf-Peter Janz, Hans Richard Brittnacher, Gerd Kleiner and Fabian Störmer, *Friedrich Schiller: Theoretische Schriften* (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker, 2008), 556–676, 570–8.
25. See, for the critique of government, Wilhelm von Humboldt, 'Ideen zu einem Versuch, die Gränzen der Wirksamkeit des Staats zu bestimmen', eds. Andreas Flitner and Klaus Giel, *Wilhelm von Humboldt: Werke in fünf Bänden*, 3rd edn (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980), I, 56–233, 85; Humboldt, 'Über das Studium des Alterthums, und des griechischen insbesondere', eds. Flitner and Giel, *Wilhelm von Humboldts Werke*, 4th edn (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1986), II, 1–24, 16; for the critique of science, Humboldt, 'Theorie der Bildung des Menschen', eds. Flitner and Giel, *Wilhelm von Humboldts Werke*, I, 234–40, 234; for Humboldt's critique of the nature of war, see my study 'Agamemnon on the battlefield of Leipzig: Wilhelm von Humboldt on ancient fighting, modern heroes, and "Bildung" through war', Elisabeth Krimmer and Patricia Anne Simpson (eds.), *Enlightened War: German theories and cultures of warfare from Frederick the Great to Clausewitz* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011), 75–102; for a critique of the Christian religion, see Wilhelm von Humboldt to Goethe, 23 August 1804, eds. Flitner and Giel, *Wilhelm von Humboldts Werke*, 2nd edn (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002), V, 212–21, 215; Humboldt, 'Pariser Tagebücher', *Ibid.*, 37–51, 41 (Bastille, 9 August 1789).
26. Hermann G. Pundt, *Schinkels Berlin*, ed. and trans. Georg G. Meerwein (Frechen: Komet, 2002), 181.
27. Heinrich Heine, 'Briefe aus Berlin', in *Denn das Meer ist meine Seele: Reisebilder, Prosa und Dramen* (Munich: Artemis & Winkler, 2003), 431–85, at 480.
28. Strecke, *Pegasus*, esp. 15–17, 99–104.

29. See Reinhard Strecke (ed.), *Schinkels Akten: Ein Inventar*, Veröffentlichungen aus den Archiven Preußischer Kulturbesitz/Arbeitsberichte (Berlin: Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 2010), 39, No. 81.
30. Three directors were to be separately responsible for the artistic, technical and financial sections. See Schinkel, 'Ueber das Projekt', 195f, also Klaus Niehr, *Gotikbilder – Gotiktheorien: Studien zur Wahrnehmung und Erforschung mittelalterlicher Architektur in Deutschland zwischen ca. 1750 und 1850* (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann Verlag, 1999), 221.
31. See, for example, Schinkel's so-called 'Hirt Polemic': Peschken, *Schinkels Lehrbuch*, 28–30.
32. *Ibid.*, 31.
33. *Ibid.*, 27 fn. 29.
34. Cf. *Ibid.*, 27.
35. Cf. Karl Friedrich Schinkel, 'Gedanken und Anmerkungen über Kunst im Allgemeinen', Wolzogen, *Schinkel's Nachlaß*, iii, 345–72, at 347. Cf. also Peschken, *Schinkels Lehrbuch*, 57.
36. See Günter de Bruyn, *Preußens Luise: Vom Entstehen und Vergehen einer Legende* (Berlin: Siedler, 2001); Luise Schorn-Schütte, *Königin Luise: Leben und Legende* (Munich: Beck, 2003), 84–100; Ziolkowski, *Berlin um 1810*, 59–64, 72–7, 83–91. See also Edgar Wolfrum, *Geschichte als Waffe: Vom Kaiserreich bis zur Wiedervereinigung*, 2nd edn (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 16–18.
37. For the context of the exhibition and the conditions of the presentation of Schinkel's proposal, see the summary in Ziolkowski, *Berlin: 1810*, 110ff.
38. William Douglas Robson-Scott, *The Literary Background of the Gothic Revival in Germany: a chapter in the history of taste* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 235. Also, Gottfried Riemann, catalogue no. 16, in Michael Snodin (ed.), *Karl Friedrich Schinkel: a universal man* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 99: 'Schinkel's interpretative catalogue note far transcended its stated aim, becoming a short treatise on the principles of architecture.'
39. See, for example, Peschken, *Schinkels Lehrbuch*, 55, where Schinkel calls the Greeks a 'most highly educated people' ('höchst gebildetes Volk').
40. Schinkel, 'Entwurf zu einer Begräbnißkapelle', 156.
41. See, for example, a note from the 1820s in Peschken, *Schinkels Lehrbuch*, 57.
42. The change specific to Germany from an orientation on Rome to a Greek enthusiasm around the middle of the eighteenth century is concisely laid out by Conrad Wiedemann in 'Römische Staatsnation und griechische Kulturnation: Zum Paradigmawechsel zwischen Gottsched und Winckelmann', Conrad Wiedemann and Franz N. Mennemeier (eds.), *Deutsche Literatur in der Weltliteratur. Kontroversen, alte und neue: Akten des vii. Internationalen Germanisten-Kongresses Göttingen 1985* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986), 173–8.
43. For the following, see the material collected in my: '". . . meine Grille von der Ähnlichkeit der Griechen und der Deutschen": Nationalkulturelle Implikationen in Wilhelm von Humboldts Antikekonzept', Veit Rosenberger (ed.), '*Die Ideale der Alten*'*: Antikerezeption um 1800* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2008), 113–29.
44. For an introduction, see Gregory Moore, 'Introduction', in *Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Addresses to the German Nation*, ed. Gregory Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), xi–xxxvi, xxvif.; Manfred Kühn, *Johann Gottlieb Fichte: Ein deutscher Philosoph 1762–1814* (Munich: Beck, 2012), 504–11; Werner Schneiders, 'Der Zwingherr zur Freiheit und das deutsche Urvolk: J. G. Fichtes philosophischer und politischer Absolutismus', in

Ulrich Herrmann (ed.), *Volk – Nation – Vaterland* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1996), 222–43, at 233f.; Ludwig Stockinger, 'Sprachkonzept und Kulturnationalismus: Anmerkungen zur Theorie der "Reinheit" der deutschen Sprache bei Herder und Fichte', in Volker Hertel, Irmhild Barz, Regine Metzler and Brigitte Uhlig (eds.), *Sprache und Kommunikation im Kulturkontext* (Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 1996), 71–84, at 80f.

45. The following is based on Saure, *Karl Friedrich Schinkel*, 290–327. Theodore Ziolkowski has summarised the museum discourse in *German Romanticism and its Institutions* (Princeton University Press, 1990), 309–21.
46. Cf. also Peschken, *Schinkels Lehrbuch*, 35.
47. Bergdoll imagines an educational museum visit in *Karl Friedrich Schinkel*, 73, 80.

11

# Influences of German Idealism on nineteenth-century architectural theory: Schelling and Leo von Klenze

Petra Lohmann

## I.

In nineteenth-century Germany, architectural thought was 'subject to profoundly heterogeneous influences; philosophy and aesthetics took a novel and decisive position with regard to architecture, and this was reflected in theory'.[1] The source of the decisive influence of philosophy on contemporary architectural theory can be found in the Berlin Academy of Architecture, which was the most significant institution for the training of future architects in the German-speaking world. The key figure was Friedrich Gilly (1772–1800), who lectured at the Academy on optics and perspective. His father, David Gilly (1748–1808), had founded the Academy in 1799 and was primarily interested in the technical and constructive aspects of architecture.[2] He was therefore ideologically closer to the Paris *École polytechnique*, which specialised in engineering, than to the aesthetically oriented *École des beaux-arts*.

Friedrich Gilly, in his essay 'Some Thoughts on the Necessity of Endeavouring to Unify the Various Departments of Architecture in Both Theory and Practice' (1799),[3] offers a veiled criticism of the exclusive focus on construction technology in the Academy of Architecture, whose curriculum was directed towards the Prussian Government's building programme, and was therefore hardly appropriate to the remit of an architecture of ideas.[4] He argues for technical-aesthetic integrity in the training of future architects, and to this end invokes the philosopher Karl Heinrich Heydenreich (1764–1801) on the justification of architecture as a type of art that is both independent and necessary for man's aesthetic cultivation. For Heydenreich, this presupposed the unambiguous inclusion of architecture in the system of fine arts. Such a status was allowed to architecture only with qualifications,

because of the mechanical and functional elements peculiar to it. Its antithesis was seen to be poetry. Since, in terms of what it is possible to conceive, imagination knows no limits, poetry usually occupied the highest position in the contemporary system of the arts.[5] The worthlessness of architecture was vociferously emphasised by art historians such as Christian Ludwig Stieglitz (1756–1836) and Johann Georg Sulzer (1720–79).[6]

In his essay, Gilly used a quotation from Heydenreich's article 'A New Conception of Architecture as a Fine Art' to voice his opposition to this view:[7] the architect, Heydenreich said, is constrained by the 'physical' and 'relative'[a] purpose of the building, but not to such a degree 'that a field does not remain for his inspiration within which he can choose the forms according to his own ideas'. When he 'succeeds in giving his buildings such forms that the notion of a physical purpose entirely disappears and the spectator is uplifted . . . by its appearance to a freer play of related images, then his work is a work of fine art' and 'the inventive architect finds himself almost in one accord with the inventive poet'.[b] Thus, Heydenreich promotes architecture not simply to the status of a fine art, but even to a certain equality with poetry, which led to an enormously positive re-evaluation of architecture, and its recognition as an instrument of aesthetic cultivation.

Gilly's approach reflects not only a new self-confidence among architects within the community of artists, but also a new self-confidence in the arts generally, particularly in their relationship with scholarship. Peter Burke described the time around 1800 'as a magical moment of equilibrium'[8] between these two cultures. Part of the background to this is the notion of 'knowledge . . . as an organism'.[9] Karl Friedrich Burdach's *The Organism of Human Knowledge and Art* is the paradigm of this concept.[10] In his book, Burdach makes plain that art was increasingly deserving of a place in the system of knowledge, which was at this time in a state of flux, principally represented by two tendencies: on the one hand, the unity of professional and humanistic education promoted by Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer (1766–1848); and, on the other hand, Friedrich Meineke's (1862–1953) stress on the

a. 'Physische[n]'; 'verhältnismäßigen'. Karl Heinrich Heydenreich, 'Neuer Begriff der Baukunst als schoener Kunst', *Deutsche Monatsschrift*, 3, H. 10, 160–4, 162.

b. 'dass nicht eine seinem Genie freye Sphäre für die Erfindung offen bliebe, innerhalb welcher er nach seinem Gefühle die Formen wählen darf'; 'gelingt, seinem Gebäude solche Formen zu geben, daß der Gedanke des physischen Zweckes ganz verschwindet und der Betrachter sogleich durch den Anblick [ . . . ] erhoben, und zu einem freyern Spiele unter Bildern, die mit ihm zusammenhängen, begeistert wird, dann ist sein Werk ein Werk der schönen Kunst'; 'der erfindende Architekt befindet sich mit dem erfindenden Dichter in ziemlich gleicher Stimmung'. *Ibid.*, 162f.

temporal process.[11] Larry Shiner speaks of the 'invention of art',[12] which took on an increasingly independent existence through art criticism and the institution of the salon, but which also claimed for itself a role as a crucial component in the overall development of society and culture.

Within philosophy, aesthetics developed as an independent object of knowledge, as can be seen above all, in the writings of Alexander Baumgarten (1712–62) and Kant. Art was promoted in this context to a 'form of knowledge'.[13] This combination of art and science (*Wissenschaft*) is also found in the charter of the Munich Academy of Fine Art (Münchner Akademie der schönen Künste), whose first general secretary was Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775–1854). The charter states that art is 'scientific' (*wissenschaftlich*) and a 'powerful means of education'.[c,14] Art students were required to undertake a course in philosophy and aesthetics as part of their training, which created a whole new approach to education. By the end of the eighteenth century, academies of art, whose graduates also received a conceptual and theoretical education, were increasingly being established to replace practical education in artists' workshops.[15]

Gilly's work at the Berlin Academy of Architecture is to be understood in this context, and it was not without influence on his contemporaries. There are many contemporary indications of this, both directly and indirectly associated with the Berlin Academy. They include, for example, links between the architects Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781–1841) and Ludwig Friedrich (Louis) Catel (1778–1856) and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, as well as those between the architect Leo von Klenze (1784–1864) and Schelling. Schinkel and Klenze were graduates of the Academy, and had studied under Friedrich Gilly. While Klenze became the most important architect in Bavaria, the same is true of Schinkel in Prussia. Catel worked in the environment of the Berlin Academy.

The reasons for the links between these architects and philosophy range from formulations of the fundamental principles of architectural theory to justifications of a particular, individual practice selected from the various currents within early historicism.[16] Within this spectrum, the key factors were the foundation of the concept of architecture as a science, and the formulation of an aesthetic world view that could be realised with the help of architecture. There are two relevant perspectives here. They are, first, of a practical and propaedeutic character and, secondly, of a systematic and scientific character. The practical and propaedeutic perspective relates to the moral education of architects, and their ethos as authors of works that

c. 'Wissenschaftlich'; 'mächtiges Bildungsmittel'. Cited after Peter Burke, *Circa 1808: Restructuring Knowledges / Um 1808: Neuordnung der Wissensarten* (Berlin and Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2008), 52f.

will have an effect on human aesthetic culture. Here the emphasis is on the formation of character. From the systematic and scientific perspective, the important factor was the epistemological, aesthetic and religio-philosophical grounding of a concept of architecture, which in turn was to serve as the justification of an aesthetic programme. Both perspectives complemented one another. In other words, philosophy served under both headings as the general foundation for specific architectural schemes. In the remainder of this chapter, the influence of this form of German Idealist philosophy on the architecture of the nineteenth century will be illustrated by Klenze's use of Schelling and of the concept of the organism.

## II.

Klenze wrote in 1822: 'The tonic and plastic arts [are associated] in their first and highest emotive meaning . . . with religious objectives.'[d] His main architectural concern was therefore with the architecture of the Christian cult. He was able to use the concept of organism as a foundation for his practice as an architect in this respect. Klenze does not give a precise definition of the 'organism', but in the works to be cited he gives different specific linguistic forms to the concept. If these different examples are reduced to their shared basic structure, it is possible to follow Rudolf Wiegmann (1804–65) in abstracting from them a fundamental unity behind these individual examples, which shows that according to Klenze, 'any organism can only exist through the reciprocal determination, active union and mutual relationship between its constituent parts'.[e,17] This definition of the 'organism' as a living whole appears in a letter from Klenze to King Ludwig I, of 31 December 1820, concerning the designs for the Valhalla memorial. He wrote there: 'but therefore you cannot deal with it like a polyp, which you can twist and turn about in any direction without dislocation, and from which you can cut off any particular limbs you like without doing any damage to the rest of the organism or its vitality'.[f] As we shall see, Klenze gives concrete

d. 'Die tonischen so wie die plastischen Künste [gehören] in ihrer ersten und höchsten pathetischen Bedeutung . . . religiösen Zwecken . . . an.' Leo von Klenze, *Philosophie*, BSTB (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek) Klenzeana, ii, 8, 35.

e. 'Jeder Organismus nur in der wechselseitigen Bedingtheit, in der lebendigen Verbindung und gegenseitigen Bezüglichkeit der ihn constituierenden Glieder bestehen kann.' Rudolf Wiegmann, *Der Ritter Leo von Klenze und unsere Kunst* (Düsseldorf: Schreiner, 1839), 47.

f. ' . . . aber deshalb lässt sich nicht wie mit einem Polypen damit umgehen, welcher sich nach allen Seiten drehen und wenden lässt, ohne sich zu verrenken, und dem man die einzelnen Glieder nach Belieben abschneiden kann ohne seinem halben Leben und Organismus Schaden zu thun'. GHA, *Nachlaß Ludwigs I.* (Geheimes Hausarchiv der Wittelsbacher, Abteilung iii, Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Munich), i A 36, 1.

form to this general schema of the 'organism' in functional, constructive, historical, anthropological and philosophical terms. Since his primary concern in architecture had the sacral character we have mentioned, he defined it by appealing to aspects of the concept of the 'organism', all of which had reference to the Absolute. These were autonomy, wholeness, completeness, permanence, truth and vitality. From these, according to Klenze, it had to be possible to deduce 'the formula in which, as it were, divinity has enshrined the "Fundamental Law of Architecture"'.[g]

Klenze advocated this view not only in his *Guide to the Architecture of the Christian Religion*,[18] in *Studies and Excerpts as Thoughts on the Emergence*, *History and Rules of Architecture*,[19] in the *Architectural Responses and Essays on my Greek and non-Greek Architecture* (sections I and II),[20] in the *Aphoristic Comments*, compiled during his journey to Greece (1838),[21] and in the *Attempt to Reconstruct the Tuscan Temple according to its Historic and Technical Analogues* (1821),[22] but also – and with particular explicitness – in his study, *Philosophy*.[23]

This piece was in accord with the contemporary interdisciplinary discussion of architectural theory, which ascribed to philosophy, because of its uniquely abstract and non-purposive mode of thought, the task of demonstrating the basis of concrete and particular knowledge in a universal principle: this was a task that, according to Klenze, architecture as a concrete discipline had not performed, but that was urgently needed in order that the 'formula' of the architecture of Christianity should first of all (methodologically) be deduced, and then (normatively) be declared universally valid. To this end, according to Klenze's *Guide to the Architecture of the Christian Religion*, it is necessary to refer to the 'universal laws of the philosophy of art'.[h] As already mentioned, there are numerous contemporary examples of this connection between architecture and philosophy, and with a similar purpose – one of the most prominent in the German-speaking world is surely the relationship between Schinkel and Fichte.[24] Klenze, on the other hand, found his philosophical authority in a follower of Fichte's: in Schelling.

Klenze's attempt to legitimise his concept of organism through Schelling had both internal and external motives. From the disciplinary and normative perspective, he wanted, like Friedrich Gilly before him, to raise architecture to the rank of a fine art, something that had generally been denied it because of its material and mechanical limitations. For only free art is fine art, and

g. 'Formel gleichsam worin die Gottheit das "Grundgesetz der Architektur" eingeschlossen ha[t].' Leo von Klenze, *Versuch einer Wiederherstellung des toskanischen Tempels nach seinen historischen und technischen Analogien* (Munich: Finsterlin, 1921).

h. 'Formel'; 'allgemeinen Gesetze der Kunstphilosophie'. Leo von Klenze, *Anweisung zur Architectur des christlichen Cultus* (Munich, 1822, reprinted Saarbrücken: Oekonomie Verlag Dr. Müller e.K., 2006), v.

Klenze needed this element of freedom in order to be able to define architecture as an unconstrained instrument of religious culture, which in turn was to be understood as ethical self-education. In respect of method, this was to be achieved by deducing the formal and material presuppositions of the crucial concept of the organism, as used in a science of Christian architecture, from a fundamental principle of the theory of architecture which philosophy was to help to set up.[25] From the religio-philosophical perspective, he wanted to establish a particular understanding of Christianity, as well as to find an appropriate form of expression for Christian architecture, which he could see as justifying an architectural style for Christian worship modelled on the Greek. To establish an aesthetic foundation for religious practice as architecture, he deployed a synthesis of antiquity and Christianity. He drew an analogy between classical architecture and the sculptural expression of polytheism in anthropomorphous statues of gods based on Greek mythology.[26] Klenze thus proved himself to be a 'confirmed Hellenist'.[i] For him, the 'inner spirit [of] Greek religion' was so close to 'Christianity' that 'the liturgical necessities of both can be satisfied in one and the same architectural fashion'.[j] The opponents of this notion included, among others, Johann David Passavant (1787–1861), who stated in his *Thoughts on the Visual Arts and the Depiction of their Progress in Tuscany* (1820)[27] that Greek architecture had a heathen source and was therefore inappropriate for the design of Christian churches.

Taken together, the two perspectives on the concept of the organism – the normative and disciplinary, and the religious and philosophical – constitute for Klenze the essential requirements for the architecture of Christianity. For, on the one hand, the external demands on Christian architecture to explain itself to the secular world required a 'formula . . . in which divinity' could enshrine 'the fundamental law of architecture' almost as an 'eternal . . . rule', while, on the other hand, without actual aesthetic practice, Christianity's internal task of providing an ultimate justification, in its own terms, for this 'eternal rule'[k] would not emerge from the abstractness of mere theory into the concrete reality of life.

i. 'Eingefleischter Hellenist'. Adrian von Buttlar: 'Es gibt nur eine Baukunst? Leo von Klenze zwischen Widerstand und Anpassung', in W. Nerdinger (ed.), *Restauration und Romantik, Architektur in Bayern zur Zeit Ludwigs I.: 1825–1848*, Exhibition 27 February – 24 May 1987, Stadtmuseum München (Munich: Heinrich Hugendubel, 1987), 105–17, at 108.

j. 'Innere Geist [der] griechischen Religion' dem 'Christenthume'; 'beyder lithurgische Bedürfnisse auf ein und demselben architektonischen Wege befriedigt werden konnten'. Klenze, *Anweisung*, 3.

k. 'Formel . . . worin die Gottheit'; 'das Grundgesetz der Architektur'; 'ewige . . . Regel'; 'eingeschlossen hätte'; 'ewigen Regel'. Leo von Klenze, *Der Tempel des olympischen Jupiter zu Agrigent, nach den neuesten Ausgrabungen dargestellt* (Munich: Cotta, 1821), 3.

In contrast to the high status thus accorded to the concept of the organism in Klenze's understanding of architecture, the two perspectives in which he wishes to see it are under-theorised. Throughout his life Klenze kept himself informed about the archaeological and religio-historical aspects of architectural research, but, despite his own statements to the contrary, he did not develop any consistent architectural theory on the basis of an aesthetic from which these perspectives on the concept of the organism could have been rigorously deduced.[28] His *Philosophy* is an unpublished fragment. He thus never formulated his intended 'fundamental law' of the architecture of the Christian cult. In order to discover its constitutive elements, it is necessary to assemble disparate passages from his other works. In addition to this, Klenze had to defend himself against accusations from colleagues who took a similar view to Passavant and, like Rudolf Wiegmann (1804–65) and Franz Kugler (1808–58), accused him of atheism because his understanding of Christian architecture ultimately implied parallels between Greek mystery cults and the monotheistic Christian religion. While Wiegmann spoke of the 'alluring but dangerous conclusions of [Klenze's] eccentric philosophy of art', which lacked 'any clear understanding of Christianity – with all due respect, an ordinary human intellect could not understand any of it',[l] Kugler specified the Christological problem as the neglect of the eschatological meaning of Christianity: 'any educated Christian knows that in the crucial respect of redemption, the inner spirit of Christianity is as wholly unrelated to earlier religions as Heaven is distant from Earth'.[m] Kugler objects to Klenze that, by comparing Christianity with Greek religion, he has reduced it to worldly relationships, and has thus deprived it of its essential meaning – that is to say, he has robbed it of its dimension of salvation history and its relationship with the transcendental world.

In order, despite these objections, to maintain the authority of architecture as an autonomous art form, and to be able to affirm it as a valid instrument for the nurturing of the Christian religion, Klenze, in expounding his concept of 'organism', appealed to Schelling, for whom he felt the

l. 'Gleißenden, aber heillosen Ergebnisse[n] [Klenzes] verschrobene[r] Kunstphilosophie'; 'einen einigermaßen klaren Begriff von Christentum [vermisst . . . – ] allen Respekt davor aber ein gewöhnlicher Menschenverstand begreift nichts davon.' Wiegmann, *Der Ritter Leo von Klenze*, 10 and 33f.

m. 'Ein jeder gebildete Christ weiß, dass in dem wichtigsten Punkte, in dem der Erlösung, der innere Geist des Christentums so außer aller Beziehung zu früheren Religionen steht, wie der Himmel entfernt ist von der Erde.' Franz Kugler, *Kleine Schriften über Neuere Kunst und deren Angelegenheiten* (Stuttgart: Ebner & Seubert, 1854), 88.

'most extraordinary esteem'.[n] In his discussion of the philosopher, who admitted the concept of 'organism' only in application to sculpture, but not to architecture, Klenze wanted to show how the term 'organism' could also be transferred to classical architecture, so that architecture could be understood as 'constructive sculpture',[o] and thus as fine art. Klenze sought to ground this attempt by reframing Schelling's interpretation of Plato, which he combined with various different – and chronologically widely separate – approaches in architectural history: Vitruvius (*c*. 70 BC), Cesare Cesariano (1475–1543) and Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand (1760–1834). The method might be labelled eclectic, but it is certainly original. Although in this respect Klenze used Schelling as a starting point for an independent position of his own, he was also the sole authority for his claim that Greek architecture was the only possible form of Christian architecture. In 1838, he turned to Schelling because he 'had blundered into a discussion which was based on an immovable conviction, but which nevertheless led to difficult and tangled paths upon which it is easy to stray into error. I appeal to you, sir, to tell me whether I am [right] in this case.'[p] Schelling in his answer agreed with Klenze that antiquity had fallen into disrepute because of 'uninspired, purely superficial and formal imitation' of it:

> instead of immersion in the spiritual approach through which such works came into being. Nowadays this superficially conceived opposition between paganism and Christianity is being exploited to reject any relationship between ancient and modern art. But it seems to me that Christian art would be in a very different situation if it first sought to recognize the profundity which the Greeks attained in their works, and then attempted to reach something equivalent or at least similar.[q,29]

n. 'Ausgezeichnetste Hochachtung'. Klenze to Schelling, 14 May 1836. AAdW (Archiv der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften), Schellingnachlaß, No. 390.

o. 'Konstruktive Plastik'. Dirk Klose, *Klassizismus als idealistische Weltanschauung. Leo von Klenze als Kunstphilosoph* (Munich: Kommissionsverlag Uni-Druck, 1999), 93.

p. 'In eine Diskussion hineingerathen [sei], welche zwar auf unumstößlicher Überzeugung beruht, jedoch auf schwierige und verwickelte Pfade führt, auf welchen man sich leicht verirren kann. Ich bitte Ew. Hochwohlgebohren mir zu sagen, ob ich in diesem Falle [richtig] bin.' Klenze to Schelling, 14 May 1836. AAdW, Schellingnachlaß No. 390.

q. 'Geistlosen, bloß äußerlichen und formellen Nachahmung'; 'anstatt in die geistige Methode selbst einzudringen, durch die solche Werke entstanden. Jetzt muß der oberflächlich verstandene Gegensatz zwischen Heidentum und Christentum sich dafür brauchen lassen, zwischen antiker und moderner Kunst jede Beziehung abzuweisen. Mir aber scheint, dass es um die christliche Kunst ganz anders stehen würde, wenn sie die Tiefe vorerst nur zu erkennen suchte, in welche die griechische mit ihren Gegenständen hinabgestiegen ist und wenn sie dann

In agreement with Schelling, Klenze tentatively set about reconstructing the history of architecture on the basis of a history of mythology and a philosophy of history.

Thanks to his training at the Berlin Academy of Architecture under Alois Hirt (1759–1837), Klenze, unlike Schinkel, never freed himself from the standard contemporary belief in the superiority of Greek architecture to all other styles. In his *Journal*, he wrote: 'My whole-hearted praise of antiquity is quite understandable – and no one has more right than I to say so, I whose opinion on this point has never wavered and will never! never! change.'[r] Klenze may be accused of a certain over-confidence, but not – despite his at times wilful adaptation of Schelling's ideas on mythology – of paganising architecture.

Accordingly, our account of Klenze's understanding of Schelling is divided into two sections. The first is devoted to expounding his notion of the work of architecture as organic, which is to say, as a living whole. The second shows how this understanding of architecture is linked to society through the concept of the organism, which functioned for the Romantics as a metaphor for an aesthetic and sociopolitical Utopia,[30] history being understood as a process within a living, constantly developing whole underpinned by an Absolute that is – like architecture – always realising itself in new forms. Some concluding remarks take up the idea of architecture as a bearer of meaning, connect it once again with the concept of 'organism', and, taking the example of Frank Lloyd Wright's (1867–1959) familiarity with Schelling, acquired through the American Transcendentalist, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1867–1959), show how the philosophy of German Idealism can also be traced in recent architecture.

### II.1

The question of whether, and how far, architecture is an organic, that is to say autonomous and 'fine', art or falls instead under the heading of 'mechanical' art (i.e., technical craftsmanship) may be extrapolated from the writings of prominent thinkers of Klenze's time. These include, for example, Karl Philipp Moritz, *On the Formative Emulation of What is Beautiful* (1788);[31]

mit den ihrigen eine gleiche oder doch ähnliche zu erreichen sich bemühte.' Schelling to Klenze, 15 May 1836, BSTB Klenzeana ii/19.

r. 'Daß Ich in dieses Lob der Antike vom ganzen Herzen einstimmte, ist wohl begreiflich: und Niemand mehr als ich hat das Recht dazu, ich dessen Ansichten über diesen Punkt nie geschwankt haben und nie! nie! wechseln werden.' Klenze, *Tagebuchaufzeichnungen 1826–43*, BSTB Klenzeana, xiii, 1.

Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *History of Ancient Art* (1763);[32] August Wilhelm Schlegel, *The Theory of Art* (1801–4);[33] and Schelling, *Philosophy of Art* (1802–3).[34] All these writers agreed that they associated their understanding of the concept of the organic in the realm of the visual arts exclusively with sculpture, and not with architecture. At most, architecture was allowed to be partially organic, and thus disqualified from the system of fine art. In order to explain this negative perception of architecture, it is necessary to return to the paradigmatic definition of the organic as formulated by Moritz, and then to reconstruct the strategy established by Klenze in debate with Schelling, through which he wished to free from pure functionality the aspects of architecture that seemed to be contradictory to the autonomy of fine art – that is to say, regularity, necessity, purposefulness, utility and predictability.

Moritz states that:

> Every part of a whole must thus itself have a greater or lesser relationship with the whole, whereas the whole when regarded as a whole requires no further relationship with anything outside itself. From this, we can therefore see that in order for something to seem without purpose, it must be an autonomous whole, and that therefore the concept of an autonomous whole is inextricably connected with the concept of what is beautiful.[s]

From this definition there follows an interpretation of the 'organism' as an 'entity . . . in which, just as in a cell of the body, there is inscribed the purpose and idea of the whole'.[35] The organism is a living whole, in which every part is an expression of the whole. It is an end in itself. In opposition to this, there are the non-organic forms, those whose parts neither directly nor indirectly contain information about the whole, for which they play only an external part. They do not exist through and for themselves, but are dependent on their function. Thus, they are directed towards an external objective, like the mechanism of a machine, in which inanimate parts can be replaced as necessary. The organism represents fine art; the non-organic object represents an art based upon utility, which at best can be classified as a partially organic art.

s. 'Jeder Theil eines Ganzen muß auf diese Weise mehr oder weniger Beziehung auf das ganze selbst haben, das Ganze als Ganzes betrachtet hingegen braucht weiter keine Beziehung auf irgendetwas außer sich zu haben. Hieraus sehen wir also, daß eine Sache um nicht nützlich seyn zu dürfen, nothwendig ein für sich bestehendes Ganzes seyn müsse und daß also mit dem Begriff des Schönen der Begriff von einem für sich bestehenden Ganzen unzertrennlich verknüpft ist.' Karl Philipp Moritz, *Über die bildende Nachahmung des Schönen* (Braunschweig: Schul-Buchhandlung, 1788), 16.

Schelling understood architecture as a partially organic art, as he stated in his *Philosophy of Art*, referring to Schlegel's Berlin lectures *On Art and Literature* (1801–4):[36] since 'architecture is however nothing more . . . than a return of sculpture to the inorganic', and since architecture 'has to do with dead materials, it must primarily build geometrically and mechanically – that is what constitutes architectural correctness', which 'is discarded only at the higher levels', which are marked by the use of 'a freer ornamentation'.[t]

In speaking of inorganic geometric forms, Schelling is alluding to Plato, who wrote in the *Timaeus* that the forms of the primordial 'elements' of the structure of the world were:[37] fire and the tetrahedron, water and the icosahedron, earth and the cube, air and the octahedron, together with the harmonious cosmos itself and the dodecahedron.[38] Organic art had to animate these geometric relationships. Schelling compared these Platonic bodies with the Greek gods. 'The gods . . . do not live a dependent and conditional life, but a free and independent one. Though particular individuals, they enjoy the bliss of the absolute', and that is 'a state which can only be exemplified by the heavenly bodies, which are the original sensual images of the gods'.[u] It was not least because of this parallel that he felt that sculpture was superior to architecture. Although classical architecture, with its geometric use of forms, recalled Platonic bodies, in the complex and subtly moulded sculptures of gods in human form this inorganic geometry was intensified into an image of a living organism. For the Greek gods together formed an organic whole that could be understood as a manifestation of the universal interconnectedness of humanity. The sculptures therefore did not represent human individuals, but gave the Absolute concrete form – that is to say, they are 'the Absolute itself, viewed tangibly'.[v] The formal analogy between classical architecture and the anthropomorphic body – reminiscent of the Vitruvian analogy between Doric and Ionic columns and the male and female bodies[39] – seemed to Schelling to be only the first stage of a development, which was perfected in the organic sculpture of the Greek pantheon.

t. 'Aber die Architektur nichts anderes . . . als ein Zurückgehen der Plastik zum Anorganischen [ist]'; 'es mit toten Materien zu tun hat, so muß sie zuvörderst geometrisch und mechanisch bauen, darin besteht die architektonische Richtigkeit'; 'erst auf den höheren Stufen abgeworfen wird'; 'eine freiere Ausschmückung'. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Schellings sämmtliche Werke*, ed. Karl Friedrich August Schelling, 14 vols. (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856–61), (hereafter SSW), Abt. i, 5, 144.

u. 'Die Götter . . . leben eben . . . kein abhängiges und bedingtes, sondern ein freies und unabhängiges Leben, sie genießen als besondere gleichwohl die Seligkeit des Absoluten'; 'ein Verhältnis, wovon nur etwa an den Weltkörpern, als den ersten sinnlichen Bildern der Götter ein Beispiel'. SSW, i, 5, 397.

v. 'Das Absolute selbst im Besonderen . . . real angeschaut'. SSW, i, 5, 398.

Reacting critically, and in the light of the concept of 'organism', to this definition of the relationship between architecture and sculpture, Klenze based his debate with Schelling on the concepts of *pathos* and *ethos*, borrowed from Aristotle's theory of rhetoric. While Klenze understood *ethos* entirely in Durand's sense, as the function of architecture as practicality for human use,[40] he conceived of *pathos*, in accordance with Plato's doctrine of ideas and their embodiment in *Phaedrus* (370–360 BC), as a preconscious, prophetic or retrospective sense of beauty, through which the passive (i.e., receptive) artistic genius has a part in the transcendental world, and, thus inspired, becomes correspondingly productive of art.

Klenze's idea was that architecture, currently defined as partly organic on the basis of its combination of function and idea or of *ethos* and *pathos*, could be raised to the status of a fully organic art on the premise that function and *ethos* were merely determinant of the particular form of the art of architecture, rather than its principle. His argument appeals to architecture's phenomenological status. For Klenze, Schelling's concept of architecture as a utilitarian art means that it is therefore a fine, or organic, art, because architecture 'does not simply insert an imprint or picture of the universe and the absolute into this particular form, but is itself the absolute. So with regard to architecture, functionality is simply the form of its appearing, not its essence. By making form and essence become one, by making this form based upon utility also become a form of beauty, architecture is elevated to a fine and organic art.'[w]

Klenze's starting point was Greek pantheism, which was reflected in the heroic (Doric), masculine (Ionic) and feminine (Corinthian) architectural orders. He felt that the 'anthropomorphic characters'[x] of the Greek orders were formed by the *pathos* of artistic genius. In this way, he felt, architecture participated as legitimately in the cosmic world of Ideas as, according to Schelling, did the sculptures of the Greek gods. In order to elevate architecture from the partially organic status to that of the fully organic, Klenze, in his fragmentary *Philosophy*, intensified the anthropological element by including within the cosmic sphere of *pathos* the geometric, constructive and functional aspects of classical architecture, which he had conceived of

w. 'Nicht nur in diese Form den Abdruck oder das Bild des Universums und des Absoluten legt, sondern das Absolute selbst ist. So ist in Ansehung der Architektur eben nur die Zweckmäßigkeit die Form der Erscheinung, nicht aber das Wesen, und in dem Verhältnis, in welchem sie Form und Wesen eines macht, in welchem sie diese Form, die an sich auf Nützlichkeit geht, zugleich zur Form der Schönheit macht, in dem Verhältnis erhebt sie sich zur schönen und organischen Kunst.' SSW, i, 5, 575.

x. 'Anthropomorphen Charaktere'. Leo von Klenze, *Bau der Glyptothek*, BSTB Klenzeana, iii, 6, 47.

as belonging to *ethos*, that is, the earthly world. Conversely, in *Responses* ii, using the concepts of 'body' and 'function', he draws an analogy between the geometrical and Platonic solids in classical architecture and the forms of the human body – or, put abstractly: an analogy between function and Idea.

He writes in *Philosophy*, with reference to Plato's *Timaeus*: 'The concept of physical beauty [is] established as the first spatial concept in the very earliest epoch of knowledge, and [it] arises from the memory of earlier visions of divine perfection.'[y] For Klenze, therefore, physical beauty is the link between the earthly and the transcendental world. Physical beauty is, 'according to Plato, the original Idea of things in God, or the rule according to which supreme perfection and functionality were originally clothed in form and matter, and in memory continue to appeal in an infinite and always harmonious diversity'.[z] In his interpretation of Plato, 'the principle of physical beauty as a harmony of function and form has its basis in nature'.[aa]

In *Responses* ii, Klenze gives concrete substance to his anthropological concept of physical beauty through reference to his geometrical premises. He refers to Vitruvius' sketch of the ideal body, in which a man with outstretched arms and legs stands in both a circle and a square. Along with curved, vertical and horizontal lines and measurements, the sketch also contains the diagonal and its corresponding geometrical form of the triangle. The latter do not appear in Vitruvius himself, but in Cesariano's edition of 1521, with which Klenze was familiar.[41] Hence, for him classical architecture reflected the divine cosmos not just through the anthropological similarity of columns to the human body, but primarily because of the abstract geometry on which the human body was constructed. Thus, architecture seemed to Klenze – in contrast to Schelling – not only partly, but fully organic.

## ii.2

Klenze thus claims to have provided a basis for recognising architecture as a fully valid ethical and religious instrument in the process of civilisation. Next he needs to defend his use of religious terms borrowed from Greek antiquity

y. 'Der Begriff von Körperschönheit als der erste räumliche schon in der allerältesten Epoche der Erkenntnis begründet, und aus der Erinnerung früherer Anschauung göttlicher Vollkommenheit hervorgegangen.' Klenze, *Philosophie*, ii, 8, 19f.

z. 'Nach Plato die ursprüngliche Idee der Dinge in Gott, das heißt die Regel nach welcher die höchste Vollkommenheit und Zweckmäßigkeit ursprünglich in Materie und Gestalt gekleidet werden, und aus der Erinnerung in unendlicher und stets harmonischer Mannigfaltigkeit wieder anspricht', *Ibid*.

aa. 'Das Gesetz körperlicher Schönheit als Harmonie des Zwecks mit der Form in der Natur . . . begründet', *Ibid*.

against the charge of atheism, in order to be able to justify treating the style of Greek antiquity as the only proper style for Christian architecture. Schelling's philosophy of history serves as his starting point.

For this purpose, in his *Guide to the Architecture of the Christian Religion*, Klenze contrasts mysteries with mythology, as well as secret cults with revealed religion. He is first of all concerned with the differences between different perceptions of the divine Idea. In the sphere of the mysteries Ideas are mental objects. Given this status, they are non-sensible, and are comprehensible only to initiates. In mythology, on the other hand, ideas are comprehensible to ordinary humanity on a symbolic level through the medium of rites and customs. Klenze wants to demonstrate that the essence of a secret cult can be part of everyday reality. This presupposes that the Ideas become applicable to real life, which they do by manifesting themselves as concrete divinities. Gods with earthly features, made real in this way, are the foundations of religion. Here Klenze is in agreement with the contemporary interest in a 'new mythology',[42] in which what is internal, that is, the ancient mysteries – such as the 'doctrine of emanation' or the 'Eleusinian rites'[43] – is to become external. While philosophy deals with the realm of ideas as internal, their external expression is popular religious practice, in the customs of which the esoteric becomes exoteric. He sees this relationship between what is internal and what is external above all in Greek art. It is the foundation of his concept of religion and the reason for his preference for the Greek style.

While in Greek religion a direct unity of the finite and the infinite is achieved in architecture and sculpture through the 'humanisation of the gods', the relationship in Christianity is indirect. It is 'only the *path* to perfection'.[bb] Christianity is therefore a propaedeutic 'for the true Gospel',[cc] which, according to Klenze, is realised in religious practice through the medium of symbols. Along with Schelling, Klenze feels that the 'symbols of Christianity' are intended to represent 'in images, the identity of God with the world', since 'the peculiarly Christian attitude is the vision of God in the finite'.[dd] Like the philosopher he understands this vision as mysticism,[44] which is only seemingly opposed to revealed religion. Revealed religion is by its nature a perpetually evolving religion. Given Christianity's characteristic trust in the future, what is esoteric about the religion is openly shown to its followers through symbols. Christianity is therefore similar to Ancient Greek religion, since from its beginnings there has been a unity between

bb. 'Vermenschlichung der Götter'; 'nur der Weg zur Vollendung'. SSW, i, 5, 120
cc. 'Wahre[n] Evangelium[s]'. SSW, i, 5, 117.
dd. 'Symbole des Christentums'; 'Identität Gottes mit der Welt in Bildern vorzustellen'; 'die dem Christentum eigentümliche Richtung ist die der Anschauung Gottes im Endlichen', *Ibid*.

internality and externality – albeit not given as a fact, as it was for the Greeks, but imposed as a task.

The development towards 'positive Christianity' is seen by Klenze as the recognition of mystery as the 'keystone crowning revelation'. This involves a view of history in which ancient Indian, Nubian, Egyptian, Persian and Greek doctrines are to be considered branches of a worldwide process of religious education, which is fulfilled in 'the progression of the entire past and present towards [the Christian] moment of salvation'.[ee] Only 'after all finite forms have been destroyed, and there is nothing left in the whole wide world to unify all humanity through a shared object of sense perception', will it, for Klenze as for Schelling, be 'solely the vision of absolute identity in the most completely objective totality that unites humanity once again and for ever in the perfected form of religion'.[ff]

Schelling's philosophy of history culminates in the notion of a complete union of subject and object, in which in Antiquity objectivity predominated, and which accordingly manifested itself in divinities that were both natural and human. In the modern era, on the other hand, a rationalised intellect has displaced this union into the abstract realm of speculative philosophy. As Idealist Nature Philosophy has demonstrated the presence of the Ideas in nature, it can be presumed that a changed picture of reality will emerge to compensate for the loss of sensuality in the purely speculative consciousness. Schelling identifies this recovered rational and material union as 'the idea of all ideas',[gg] and as the 'return of the gods'.[45]

In this context, Schelling understands the Christ Child as a 'reborn Dionysus' – as the 'last ruler of the world, to whom Greece [was] above all devoted'.[hh] He sees Christ as the last of the gods, for he encapsulates the whole of mythology. In this he includes the Orphic cosmogonies and their doctrine of the epochs of Uranus, Kronos, Zeus and Dionysus. Thus, he links the idea that through, or in, the child Dionysus, the world that had been secularised in the epoch of Kronos could be turned back into the supersensible world.[46] In his observations on 'Early Religions and their Relationship to Christianity', Klenze agrees with Schelling that the

ee. 'Positiven Christentum'; 'Schlussstein der Offenbarung'; 'ein Hinwirken der ganzen Vor- und Mitwelt auf [das christliche] Moment der Erlösung'. Klenze, *Anweisung*, 1f.

ff. 'Nur die Anschauung der absoluten Identität in der vollkommensten objektiven Totalität seyn, die sie aufs Neue und in der letzten Ausbildung der Religion auf ewig vereinigt'. SSW, i, 2, 72f.

gg. 'Idee aller Ideen'. SSW, i, 5, 390.

hh. 'Letzten Weltregent[en, dem] vorzüglich Griechenland zugethan'. Manfred Frank, *Der kommende Gott. Vorlesungen über die Neue Mythologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), 311.

'incarnation of Jesus Christ', is 'the culminating insight'[ii] of a long religious development.

Klenze, like Schelling, thus demonstrates a dialectical understanding of mythology. He envisages a progression that began with a unity, which, however, was at first inadequate – for example, the monotheism of the Old Testament or the astral cult of the Sabaeans (*Zabismus*). This unity remained incomplete, because its scope was not universal, and it broke apart into a polytheistic multiplicity. At this point mythology began. At the end of the development we find a self-certain unity that reveals itself as such. In the God of this final unity, the previous forms of the divine are sublated. The unity is realised in the birth of the divine child. For Klenze, the 'appearance of the saviour of the world' is the 'purpose of our era'.[jj] He shares with Schelling the conception of the Dionysian as the 'imminent' and ' liberating'[kk] God, who incorporates the eternal potential for the external realisation of mystic internality. It is fundamentally always one and the same God, who reveals himself in different eras and with correspondingly specific characteristics. Schelling thus understands the name of Jehovah, meaning: 'I will be who I will be', in a Dionysian sense as the 'name of the one who is future, who is only now evolving, who will one day be'.[ll] By means of this model of the continuous revelation of the internal through the external and the gradual approximation of the external to the internal, Greek architecture is for Schelling and Klenze shown to be the specifically Christian form of architecture because of its function as an image of this intersection between the esoteric and the exoteric, which in turn is the stimulus for religious practice.

## III.

Klenze's reception of Schelling and the example of the concept of 'organism' show that German Idealism did have an influence both on specific areas of contemporary architectural theory and on the principles of design in practical work. While the understanding of Schelling's concept of the 'organism' as a living whole, and of its relevance to the unity of time and of the religions of the world, was of great importance for Klenze, Frank Lloyd Wright's reaction to Ralph Waldo Emerson's concept of organism[47] (which was also informed

ii. 'Frühere[n] Religionen und ihre[n] Beziehungen zum Christenthume'; 'Menschwerdung Jesus Christus'; 'Gipfel der Erkenntnis'. Klenze, *Anweisung*, 1.

jj. 'Erscheinung des Weltheilands'; 'Ziel unsrer Weltepoche', *Ibid.*

kk. 'Kommende[n]'; 'befreiende[n]'. SSW, ii, 2, 351.

ll. 'Ich werde da sein, als der ich da sein werde'; 'Namen des Zukünftigen, des jetzt nur Werdenden, der einst seyn wird'. SSW, ii, 1, 172.

by German Idealism[48]) shows that certain aspects of Schelling's concept can be related to recent developments in architecture. The essential elements here are geometry and the organic analogy, and the frame of reference is the relationship between nature and culture. Leaving aside the intrinsic differences in how Klenze and Wright understand Schelling's 'organism', the closest similarity between them in their use of the philosopher lies in their recognition of a necessary presupposition for defining the concept in the first place: the principle of a unified totality of life, which differentiates itself into a living multiplicity.

In *Nature* (1836),[49] Emerson developed a mystically informed theory of nature in reaction to Schelling's concept of the 'world-soul' (*On the Soul of the World*, 1798[50]). Emerson prefers to speak of the 'Over-soul'. Following Schelling, he understands it as an organising and unifying principle, that continually links organic and inorganic nature, and so combines the whole of nature into a universal organism.[51] Under the influence of Emerson's *Nature*, according to Robert McCarter,[52] Wright develops a programme of organic architecture that sees nature as God's creation. For him, 'life is a gift from a divine source',[53] and nature is the image of this source. Nature serves him as the impulse, motive and agency for his organic architecture, which he describes as 'sermons in stones'.[54]

In his essay 'In the Cause of Architecture' (1914),[55] Wright defined the organic character of architecture in the following terms: 'I mean an architecture that develops from within outward in harmony with the conditions of its being as distinguished from one that is applied from without.'[56] A living unity, in the sense of a self-perpetuating organism, is the common basis of nature and architecture. Wright's background was Welsh Unitarianism, according to which the 'UNITY of all things'[57] underlies, directs and concludes every quest for understanding. The structuring of the world is held to be immanent, and the natural and the metaphysical spheres are held to be not two separate entities, but one single sphere, so that therefore the supersensible appears in nature. For him, as for Emerson, humanity is part of nature, or at least emerges from it. It is therefore possible to have a preconscious intimation of these relationships. In this sense 'truth was in us before it was ever reflected to us from natural objects',[58] but since nature functions as a mirror, we should, according to Emerson, 'esteem nature a perpetual counselor, and her perfections the exact measure of our deviations'.[59]

Wright combines Emerson's Transcendentalist principles with the educational theory of Friedrich Fröbel (1782–1852), a colleague of Pestalozzi.

Fröbel and Wright, like Emerson, advocate 'reasoning from the seen to the unseen',[60] by recourse to the geometric forms which – considered in the abstract – constitute the natural world. According to Fröbel, there are what he calls twenty 'gifts'.[61] These are toys modelled on crystalline structures, with which a child's spatial awareness and tactile sense could be developed. For Fröbel the key is both the recognition of the basic geometric forms of the objects that constitute the material world, and a training in the awareness that these objects are all determined by these basic geometric forms, and so together form an 'organic unity'.[62] For Wright as an architect, this means that he does not focus on the material and ornamental parts of nature as a model for architectural forms, but on the geometry underlying all existence.

This entirely pure and utilitarian geometry is not only the formal criterion of Wright's architecture, but, most importantly, it is its moral basis. The circle stands for infinity; the triangle for structural unity; the tower for desire; the spiral for organic process and the square for integrity. Neglecting these forms has serious consequences. According to Wright, 'architectural sins are permanent',[63] because architecture – like no other form of art – reaches into and affects all aspects of human life. Therefore, Wright felt that engagement with the geometrically constituted organic whole was far more than a formal tool in the process of aesthetic composition. It was rather the motivation for his own ideal conception of the world.

*Translated by Mary Boyle*

## Notes

1. Hanno-Walter Kruft, *Geschichte der Architekturtheorie. Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Cologne: Taschen, 2004), 331. See also Claude Mignot, *Architektur des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne: Taschen, 1994).
2. David Gilly, *Handbuch der Land-Bau-Kunst* (Berlin: Friedrich Maurer, 1797–1811); D. Gilly, *Sammlung nützlicher Aufsätze* (Berlin: Friedrich Maurer, 1797–1806).
3. Friedrich Gilly, 'Einige Gedanken über die Nothwendigkeit, die verschiedenen Theile der Baukunst in wissenschaftlicher und praktischer Hinsicht möglichst zu vereinigen', in *Friedrich Gilly. Essays zur Architektur, 1796–1799*, ed. Fritz Neumeyer (Berlin: Ernst & Sohn, 1997), 178–87.
4. Kruft, *Architekturtheorie*, 336.
5. Johann Heinrich Koosen, *Propädeutik der Kunst* (Königsberg: Tag & Koch, 1847), 215.
6. Christian Ludwig Stieglitz, *Encyklopädie der bürgerlichen Baukunst in welcher alle Fächer dieser Kunst nach alphabetischer Ordnung abgehandelt sind. Ein Handbuch für Staatswirte, Baumeister*

*und Landwirte*, 5 vols. (Leipzig: Caspar Fritsch, 1772–98); Johann Georg Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste in einzelnen, nach alphabetischer Ordnung der Kunstwörter auf einander folgenden Artikeln* (Leipzig: M. G. Weidmanns Erben & Reich, 1771–4). Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Solger is an exception. He inverts the hierarchy of the arts as usually formulated in the contemporary systems. The other arts only have 'their meaning' 'in relation' to architecture. Compare Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Solger, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik*, ed. Karl Wilhelm Ludwig Heyse (Leipzig: Brockhaus 1829, reprinted Darmstadt, 1980), 345.

7. Karl Heinrich Heydenreich, 'Neuer Begriff der Baukunst als schoener Kunst', *Deutsche Monatsschrift*, 3, H. 10, 160–4.
8. Peter Burke, *Circa 1808: Restructuring Knowledges / Um 1808: Neuordnung der Wissensarten* (Berlin and Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2008), 29.
9. *Ibid.*, 33.
10. Karl Friedrich Burdach, *Der Organismus menschlicher Wissenschaft und Kunst* (Erlangen: Mitzky, 1809), 36.
11. Burke, *Circa 1808*, 43.
12. Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art: a cultural history* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
13. Burke, *Circa 1808*, 51.
14. See Bernhard Lypp (ed.), *Schelling und die Akademie der Bildenden Künste* (Munich: Schlebrügge-Editor, 2002), 69, 77.
15. Cf. *Ibid.*, 53.
16. Michael Brix and Monika Steinhauser (eds.), *Geschichte ist allein zeitgemäß. Historismus in Deutschland* (Lahn-Gießen: Anabas Verlag Kampf, 1987).
17. See also Leo von Klenze, *Philosophie*, BSTB (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek) Klenzeana, ii, 8, 19.
18. Leo von Klenze, *Anweisung zur Architectur des christlichen Cultus* (Munich, 1822, reprinted Saarbrücken: Oekonomie Verlag Dr. Müller e.K., 2006).
19. Leo von Klenze, *Studien und Excerpte als Gedanken über Entstehen, Geschichte und Regeln der Architectur von 1809 bis . . .*, BSTB Klenzeana, II, 4.
20. Leo von Klenze, *Architektonische Erwiederungen und Erörterungen über Griechisches und Nichtgriechisches von meiner Architektur*, BSTB, Klenzeana I, 9, 11a.
21. Leo von Klenze, *Aphoristische Bemerkungen, gesammelt auf seiner Reise nach Griechenland* (Berlin: Reimer, 1838).
22. Klenze, *Versuch einer Wiederherstellung des toskanischen Tempels nach seinen historischen und technischen Analogien* (Munich: Finsterlin, 1921).
23. Klenze, *Philosophie*, II, 8.
24. Compare Petra Lohmann, *Architektur als Symbol des Lebens. Zur Wirkung der Philosophie Johann Gottlieb Fichtes auf die Architekturtheorie Karl Friedrich Schinkels (1803–1815)* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2010).
25. Leo von Klenze, *Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfe für die Ausführung bestimmt oder wirklich ausgeführt (1830–50)* (Munich: Cotta, 1830), Issue 1, Foreword.
26. Compare Dirk Klose, *Klassizismus als idealistische Weltanschauung. Leo von Klenze als Kunstphilosoph* (Munich: Kommissionsverlag Uni-Druck, 1999), 81.

27. Johann David Passavant, *Ansichten über die bildenden Künste und Darstellung des Ganges derselben in Toscana*, *Heidelberg und Speyer* (Heidelberg: August Oswald's Buchhandlung, 1820).
28. Cf. Klose, *Klassizismus als idealistische Weltanschauung*, 75–95.
29. See Klose, *Klassizismus als idealistische Weltanschauung*, 15.
30. Manfred Frank, *Der kommende Gott. Vorlesungen über die Neue Mythologie* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1982), 156.
31. Karl Philipp Moritz, *Über die bildende Nachahmung des Schönen* (Braunschweig: Schul-Buchhandlung, 1788).
32. Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (1763) (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993, reprint of 1964 edition).
33. August Wilhelm Schlegel, *Die Kunstlehre*, in *Kritische Schriften und Briefe*, ed. E. Lohner, 7 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1963), II.
34. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, in Karl Friedrich August Schelling (ed.), Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Schellings sämmtliche Werke*, 14 vols., Abt. I, 5 (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856–61) [hereafter SSW].
35. Frank, *Gott*, 155.
36. In Schlegel, *Kunstlehre*, 140–57.
37. Plato, *Timaeus*, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 1151–1211.
38. *Ibid.*, 1181.
39. *The Architecture of Marcus Vitruvius Pollio*, trans. J. Gwilt (London: Weale, 1860), 81–2.
40. Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, *Précis des leçons d'architecture*, 2 vols. (Nordlingen: Dr. Alfons Uhl, 1986), 4.
41. Klenze, *Erwiederungen*, I, 9, 22.
42. *Ibid.*, 251.
43. Klenze, *Anweisung*, 2.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Frank, *Gott*, 248.
46. Cf. *Ibid.* 249 and 310f.
47. Compare Robert McCarter, *Frank Lloyd Wright* (London: Phaidon, 1997), 13–14.
48. Thomas Krusche, *R. W. Emersons Naturauffassung und ihre philosophischen Ursprünge. Eine Interpretation des Emersonschen Denkens aus dem Blickwinkel des deutschen Idealismus* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1987), 234f and 215–17.
49. Reprinted in *Essays. Second Series* (Boston: J. Munroe, 1844).
50. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Von der Weltseele*, in SSW, Abt. I, 9.
51. SSW, I, 2, 596.
52. Compare Ákos Moravánsky, *Architekturtheorie im 20. Jahrhundert. Eine kritische Anthologie* (Vienna: Springer, 2003), 262–5 and McCarter, *Frank Lloyd Wright*, 17, 19 and 22.
53. Quoted McCarter, *Frank Lloyd Wright*, German edition (Munich: DVA, 2010), 18.
54. *Ibid.*, 17.
55. Frank Lloyd Wright, 'In the cause of architecture', in Robert Twombly (ed.), *Frank Lloyd Wright: essential texts* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009), 159–85.
56. *Ibid.*, 162.

57. Quoted in McCarter, *Frank Lloyd Wright*, German edition, 18.
58. McCarter, *Frank Lloyd Wright* (London edition), 14.
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*
61. *Ibid.*, 12.
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*, 14.

12

# 'Making a world': the impact of Idealism on museum formation in mid-nineteenth-century Massachusetts

Ivan Gaskell

In nineteenth-century Europe and its diaspora, the boundary between art and science was not so impermeable as it was later to become. Just as art works could be classified by medium and place of origin – rather like natural history specimens – so dealers and collectors displayed and illustrated natural history specimens as bearers of aesthetic qualities.

New institutions of a type first founded in the mid-eighteenth century, but that only proliferated from the early nineteenth century onwards, absorbed all kinds of tangible things – art works and natural history specimens, among others. These novel institutions – museums – were among the major generators of knowledge claims in the nineteenth-century European world. They only ceded their scholarly authority in many areas to even more novel institutions – research universities – in the early twentieth century.[1]

Idealism had a huge and generally unacknowledged impact on the formation, fundamental principles and scholarly practices of museums through the education of their founders, directors and curators. However, it would be misleading to generalise further about this complex phenomenon. It varied considerably from place to place, and field of inquiry to field of inquiry.

This chapter is based on a paper given at the workshop 'The Impact of Idealism' at Magdalene College, University of Cambridge, in December 2010. I subsequently gave lectures incorporating progressive revisions at the Bard Graduate Center, New York City, in February 2011, and at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, in September 2011. I should like to thank all those colleagues and students whose comments on all three occasions led to revisions. The award of the Beinecke Fellowship at the Clark for the fall semester, 2011 gave me the opportunity to complete revisions that have resulted in the present text. I should like to thank the director of the Research and Academic Program at the Clark, Michael Ann Holly, her colleagues and my fellow fellows for vital support and ideas. I also owe a debt of gratitude to the librarians, archivists and curators at the Ernst Mayr Library of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Houghton Library and the Harvard University Archives, all at Harvard University.

I have therefore chosen to present a pair of interlocking case studies that concern just one regional centre of scholarship in the mid-nineteenth-century European diasporic world: Boston, Cambridge and Concord in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Museum formation equally complex and ambitious was occurring simultaneously in other centres of scholarship on the North American littoral, for instance, in Boston's intellectual peer and competitor city, Philadelphia. Yet although Idealism had an impact on Philadelphia's emerging collecting institutions, there are profound differences between the developments in the two centres.[2]

In this exploration, I shall look at aspects of the work of two thinkers in eastern Massachusetts who knew one another, but who to my knowledge have never previously been paired or compared: Louis Agassiz and Henry David Thoreau. While Agassiz's founding of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University in 1859 is well known, the fact that Thoreau formed a major collection not only of natural history specimens, but of ancient North American Indian artefacts is not. Some seven hundred of Thoreau's Indian items have been in Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology since it opened in 1869 in what was a physical extension to Agassiz's Museum of Comparative Zoology. Even if not in the same museum, Agassiz's and Thoreau's things are even now in the same building.

By 1869, tangible things had come to form the basis of an epistemology that gave rise to museums. This was based on the premise that one could make knowledge claims derived from observation that leads to the distinction of particular characteristics. These observations permitted classification within a schema held to represent some truth about the world. This was no easy task, as those who undertook it made clear. For instance, the prominent Concord philosopher and poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82) indicated the challenge in his essay 'Experience', published in 1844:

> I take this evanescence and lubricity of all objects, which lets them slip through our fingers then when we clutch hardest, to be the most unhandsome part of our condition. Nature does not like to be observed, and likes that we should be her fools and playmates.[3]

In this chapter, I shall examine aspects of the process whereby Agassiz and Thoreau, and the collecting institutions they supported, attempted to find 'form and order', as Emerson put it, in the world.

Throughout the nineteenth century, American society experienced an increasing concern with the ordering and re-ordering of tangible things so

that they should no longer appear what Emerson called 'a dull miscellany and lumber-room', but offer meanings whether in and of themselves, or in consequence of their place in an orderly scheme. Museums were the principal institutional means of addressing this project. They did so in the first instance by means of classification: the discernment of similarities and differences among the sensually apprehensible properties exhibited by those tangible things. The Smithsonian Institution, founded in 1836, became the largest single body in America devoted to this project. The Smithsonian was itself divided into a number of specialised units and, although these have changed, remains so. The classificatory habit of mind became so ingrained that its adherents used it to order the institutions of classification themselves no less than the material subject to classification within them. In 1895, the assistant secretary of the Smithsonian in charge of the United States National Museum, George Brown Goode (1851–96), described six categories of museum in his book, *Principles of Museum Administration*. They are as follows: 'A. Museums of Art; B. Historical Museums; C. Anthropological Museums; D. Natural History Museums; E. Technological Museums; F. Commercial Museums.' With the exception of the last category, this schema still obtains.[4] Goode's second axis of categorisation concerns the character of museums by type rather than by field of inquiry: 'G. National Museums; H. Local, Provincial, or City Museums; I. College and School Museums; J. Professional or Class Museums; K. Museums or Cabinets for special research owned by societies or individuals.'[5] Thus, Goode classified the classifiers. I shall focus on Goode's categories C, D and I; that is, on anthropology museums, natural history museums, and college and school museums, specifically at Harvard University, with a mention of K, in particular, cabinets for special research owned by individuals, specifically those of Agassiz and Thoreau.

The Swiss natural historian Louis Agassiz (1807–73) arrived in Boston from Neuchâtel in autumn 1846. He had been invited to lecture by the Lowell Institute, and would soon be appointed to head the new Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard. He began teaching in spring 1848. By the time he came to America, Agassiz had achieved renown in two areas: paleoichthyology and glaciology. His monumental, five-volume *Recherches sur les poissons fossiles* had been published between 1833 and 1843,[6] and his *Études sur les glaciers* in 1840.[7] Agassiz is best known today as the leading apologist for human polygenism, the theory of independent human ethnicities and separate creations, the various human races being endowed with unequal capacities. However, this is not the element in Agassiz's thinking I shall discuss here. Rather, the

focus will be on aspects of the place of tangible things in Agassiz's scientific practice.

In 1827, Agassiz moved from the University of Heidelberg to the University of Munich. There, he learned from his professor of anatomy and physiology, Ignaz Döllinger (1770–1841), the techniques and advantages of careful observation. In his autobiographical sketch, Agassiz wrote:

> With Döllinger I learned to value the accuracy of observation. As I was living in his house he gave me personal instruction in the use of the microscope . . . Döllinger was a careful, minute, persevering observer, as well as a deep thinker.[8]

Agassiz retained and developed this habit of close observation throughout his career, and it informed the extraordinary care he took over the visual representation of his subjects in his publications. He was responsible, through his associates, for some of the most exacting and aesthetically compelling reproductive illustrations of extinct and contemporary creatures ever made. At Munich, however, Agassiz also absorbed the practice of working with *a priori* claims. He learned to value their standing from such grand theorists as the philosopher-naturalist Lorenz Oken (1779–1851), who had started his academic career in Jena as a somewhat wayward protégé of Goethe's, and the philosopher Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854), who also owed his first academic position to Goethe. In autumn 1828, Oken and Schelling lectured each week in the same hall in succession.[9] From them, Agassiz learned that there need be no contradiction between minute and precise observation of specimens and *a priori* principles, for, according to his teachers, such data was reflective of ideal representations of final purpose and fixed cause. That purpose and cause, they suggested, was ordered in accordance with a divine plan. In this divine plan, living creatures were the earthly manifestations of a transcendental ideal.[10]

We should bear in mind that the form of attention we associate with natural history specimens as an entirely dispassionate, scientific or forensic undertaking was foreign to Agassiz and his contemporaries, particularly those with a German academic background, for whom art and science were equally aspects of the human (or, indeed, divine) spirit. A purely English art scholar, such as John Smith, applied a close description of physical characteristics to his chosen bodies of material, and systematic categorisation by medium, school and individual artist, and Smith's *Catalogue Raisonné of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish, and French Painters*, published in nine volumes between 1829 and 1842, is in many respects a project analogous to

Agassiz's five-volume *Poissons fossiles* of 1833–43.[11] But Smith's categorisations and attributions had no basis beyond his own empirical knowledge and experience as a dealer, and were criticised on those grounds by his academic German rival, the (philosophically educated) museum director, Gustav Friedrich Waagen. In the German-influenced world, scientists, no less than art scholars, were taking aesthetic considerations concerning their material into account, profoundly affecting the collection, exchange and display of fossils and other natural specimens. For example, the Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences of the University of Cambridge contains the fossil skull of the Chimaeroid fish, *Edaphon sedgwickii*. Louis Agassiz identified and defined the species, and named it in honour of the Cambridge geologist, Adam Sedgwick (1785–1873), for whom the museum is also named. In the Sedgwick Museum, it is presented like an objet d'art on a velvet-covered base, beneath a glass dome edged with crimson chenille. In the same museum, there are examples of fossils prepared in shadow boxes like sculptural reliefs by dealers to fit into aesthetically conceived private collections no less than into new scientific museums. One example is *Pentacrinus subancularis*, prepared by Mary Anning (1799–1847) of Lyme Regis. Even in the 1870s, exemplary objects of both art and natural history could be exhibited together. A photograph of 1874 shows that the Natural History Room in Boylston Hall at Harvard exhibited not only zoological specimens, including a giant clam and a mastodon skeleton, but casts of such celebrated antique statues as the *Venus de' Medici* and the *Borghese Warrior*.[12] Aesthetic and scientific forms of attention were still regarded as part of the same single task of understanding the world, as they had been in Kant's *Critique of Judgement* in 1790, or Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* in 1800. The strict segregation of art works from natural history specimens was yet to come.

In 1831, Agassiz moved to Paris to become the protégé of Georges Cuvier (1769–1832) at the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle. From Cuvier he learned the forensic skills on which he based his subsequent researches, notably the method of applying the principle of the correlation of parts to reconstruct fragmentary fossil remnants. This allowed the adept scientist to infer the complete animal from just one surviving part of its body. Further, that adept scientist should then be able to place the reconstructed creature within the natural order of species.[13] Further yet, Agassiz learned to relate fossil remains of long extinct species to living creatures, so that the historical and the contemporary might form a single unit of experience and consideration. This is not to say that he acknowledged developmental or evolutionary connections among them. Agassiz accepted Cuvier's assertion that there was

no evidence of species having developed from other species. Rather, Agassiz followed Cuvier in holding that species were immutable.

Agassiz's conception of what would now be called intelligent design accorded well with ideas regarding the divinity of a complex creation familiar to many New Englanders from the Transcendentalist lectures and publications of Ralph Waldo Emerson and his associates. The group effort had been focused on the journal, *The Dial*, published in Boston between 1840 and 1844, with Margaret Fuller as its editor.[14] But when Agassiz arrived in Boston in late 1846, the emphasis he brought with him on the detailed observation of specific elements of the natural world also found an echo in what we might call Emerson's school. Agassiz had relied on collections, both private and institutional, throughout Europe in order to be able to write *Poissons fossiles*. Among the most important collections of both fossils and extant creatures was his own. He set about acquiring specimens as soon as he arrived in Boston, relying on a network of intellectually sympathetic new acquaintances. Among them was Henry David Thoreau. As Richard Smith has recently established, in spring 1847, Agassiz asked Thoreau, then living in his cabin at Walden Pond, to procure natural history specimens for him. Who was the link between them – perhaps Thaddeus William Harris, perhaps Emerson – is not clear, but Smith reports that 'Thoreau caught – and sent off to Harvard College – pouts, perch, breams, minnows, several kinds of tortoise, a black snake, some shiners and, amazingly, a live fox, all to the delight of Agassiz.'[15] To these, as we shall see, we can add a native mouse.

Once Agassiz had decided to accept a chair at Harvard, the college treasurer purchased an unused bathhouse to accommodate his ever-growing collections. His assistants from Europe were kept busy preparing specimens, and drawing them for lithographic reproduction under Agassiz's own supervision.[16] The results were some of the most spectacular and amazing book illustrations ever produced for his various ambitious publications, such as the monumental *Contributions to the Natural History of North America* (1857–62).[17] Admittedly, the degree of organisation represented by these great published works was not necessarily reflected in the order of material things. In 1868 over 80,000 specimens that had been gathered under Agassiz's direction during his expedition to Brazil were as yet unsorted or even unpacked, and the previous year the curator complained that so much material had accumulated that it had become impossible to find specific specimens. Of some stray fossil teeth, he wrote: 'It were a hopeless task to find them in his collections in the state in which they now are.'[18] Agassiz's specimens were also vital for teaching. When he began to teach at Harvard in

spring 1848, it soon became clear that his methods were not confined to the familiar lecture course, but included field trips to observe nature in situ, and the assigned examination by his students of individual specimens in great detail. One first-hand reported example of this aspect of Agassiz's teaching methods must stand for many. In his autobiography, Joseph Le Conte (1823–1901), one of Agassiz's first students at Harvard, and subsequently a professor at Berkeley, describes the first assignment Agassiz set him and a fellow student:

> The first task Agassiz set us was very characteristic of the man. He thought a while, then pulled out a drawer containing from five hundred to a thousand separated valves of Unios [bivalve molluscs], of from fifty to a hundred different species, all mixed together, and said, 'Pair these valves and classify into species; names no matter; separate the species.' He left us alone, very severely alone. We worked on those shells for one whole week, the professor looking at our work from time to time but making no remark. Finally we told him that we had done the best we could; he examined the results carefully and was much pleased. It so happened that just then there entered the room a friend of his from Europe, Ampère, the son of the great electrician. He introduced us and remarked that these pupils had just amended correctly the classification of [Isaac] Lea, the great authority on Unios.[19]

For this kind of teaching, a museum was essential. With the financial support of Francis Calley Gray (1790–1856), Agassiz's methods and ambitions led to the founding in 1859 of the museum within the university that Agassiz himself named the Museum of Comparative Zoology. It became, and has remained, one of the principal American engines of research and scholarship on vertebrate and invertebrate creatures, currently housing over 21 million specimens, including many type specimens, that is, those specimens that serve as ultimate references for the definition of a species.

Charles Darwin (1809–82), with whom Agassiz had corresponded amicably, had published *On the Origin of Species* in the same year – 1859 – that Agassiz founded the Museum of Comparative Zoology. Darwin proposed the instability of species, natural selection, responsiveness to local environment and evolution. These were ideas with which Agassiz, true to Cuvier's principles, profoundly disagreed, and would continue to do so for the rest of his life. For all his extraordinary attention to the particularities of specimens from the natural world, Agassiz would always adhere to the principles

that Darwin set out to refute, eventually leading to his intellectual and academic isolation. At first, Agassiz was anything but isolated. He continued to enjoy warm relationships with the extraordinary intellectual inhabitants of Boston, Cambridge and Concord. Emerson and Agassiz were faithful members of the Saturday Club, a small men's dining club that met monthly from 1856 onwards, usually in Boston.[20] Emerson had a high regard for Agassiz, and he and his wife Lidian placed their two daughters, Ellen and Edith, in the school for girls run by Agassiz's wife, Elizabeth Cary Agassiz (who would become the first president of Radcliffe College) between 1856 and 1863. On 13 November 1860, Emerson was among the worthies who attended the dedication ceremony of the new Museum of Comparative Zoology.[21] But Agassiz quarrelled with his Harvard colleague, the botanist Asa Gray (1810–88), who publicly espoused Darwin's principles and who bested Agassiz in debate.[22] In late 1864, Agassiz was even rumoured to have challenged Gray, in Heidelberg fashion, to a duel.[23] Then, between April 1865 and August 1866, Agassiz undertook his major foreign expedition, known after its sponsor, Nathaniel Thayer (1808–83), as the Thayer Expedition, to Brazil. The expedition served both to remove Agassiz from a personally intolerable situation, and also to procure evidence to refute the spread of Darwin's ideas. As Louis Menand puts it: 'It was a mission with a mission. Agassiz intended to gather evidence that would disprove the theories of Charles Darwin; and knowing in advance exactly what he was looking for, he found it.'[24]

The Brazilian government, and the emperor, Dom Pedro II, personally, provided many amenities, and Agassiz developed a close and lasting relationship with the emperor.[25] The Thayer Expedition was a large-scale enterprise, for Agassiz was able to bring not only his wife Elizabeth Cary Agassiz, but also four fellow scientists, six of his students and his long-term collaborator, Jacques Burkhardt, an accomplished artist who had studied in Munich and Rome. (His watercolour sketchbook of Roman views from 1828 survives in the Museum of Comparative Zoology.) Burkhardt had collaborated with Agassiz on the plates for the *Poissons fossiles*, and had followed Agassiz to America from Neuchâtel in 1847, where he worked on the illustrations for Agassiz's four-volume *Contributions to the Natural History of North America* (1857–62). In Brazil, Burkhardt made innumerable sketches of specimens, notably fish, collected in both the Rio de Janeiro area, where the expedition had spent its first three months, and on the Amazon. But he also turned his landscape skills to good effect, producing numerous watercolour scenes, many of which were subsequently adapted as illustrations to *A Journey in Brazil*, Louis and Elizabeth Agassiz's account of the Thayer Expedition,

published in 1868. One of the illustrations, however, a woodcut of Elizabeth Agassiz's Brazilian housemaid, Alexandrina, was derived from a portrait drawn by one of the student members of the expedition,[26] none other than the future psychologist and philosopher William James (1842–1910), then a student at the Harvard Medical School. Writing to his father, James exhibited both his resistance to Agassiz's theorising and his admiration of his professor's dedication and detailed learning:

> I have profited a great deal by hearing Agassiz talk, not so much by what he says, for never did a man utter a greater amount of humbug, but by learning the way of feeling of such a vast practical engine as he is. No one sees farther into a generalisation than his knowledge of details extends, and you have a greater feeling of weight and solidity about the movement of Agassiz's mind, owing to the continual presence of this great background of special facts, than about the mind of any other man I know.[27]

Although he had to leave the expedition after eight months owing to illness, James sketched a caricature of its triumphant return as a procession of porters, animals and carts bearing specimens, including a huge faceted geometric form labelled 'Large Diamond from the "Emp"'. A figure representing Agassiz carries a placard reading '4,00000000000 new species of fish'.[28] In his subsequent philosophical contributions, James would change the focus of attention from the object itself, and the characteristics it exhibits, to the individual's experience of that object. It followed, James believed, that objective analysis can never halt the world or human experience of it. According to James, the very process of observation itself will affect the result of any empirical attempt to establish veracity owing to the inseparability of the mind, its experiences and nature. As Robert Brandom argues, William James takes us 'from German Idealism to American Pragmatism – and back'.[29] I do not believe he does this quite alone, for the epistemological paradigm that saw extensive collections of many kinds of tangible things, established both within universities and as independent museums, depended for its efficacy on a belief in disinterested, accurate observation advanced by scholars whose claims kept in tension the incremental accumulation of vast quantities of empirical data derived from those tangible things, and assumptions about realities that transcended those objects of experience. How a pragmatic, if not Pragmatist, mindset might nonetheless have an affinity with German Idealism is suggested by the second contributor to Massachusetts museum culture I wish to consider, Thoreau. But in Thoreau's case it is not,

as with Agassiz, Schelling whose shadow we find in the background, but the progenitor of Idealism himself, Immanuel Kant.

Thoreau may well have been Emerson's protégé, indebted to him for intellectual stimulation no less than for material support in his role as gardener and odd job man to the Sage of Concord, but he was quite recalcitrantly his own man. There was a profound difference of ideas between the two thinkers concerning tangible things, and what might be learned from them. Speaking of things constitutive of the world in his 1837 address at Harvard's Commencement, Emerson claimed that if you 'show me the sublime presence of the highest spiritual cause lurking, as always it does bristling with the polarity that ranges it instantly on an eternal law', then 'the world lies no longer a dull miscellany and lumber-room, but has form and order; there is no trifle, there is no puzzle, but one design unites and animates the farthest pinnacle and the lowest trench'.[30] Thoreau, in contrast, is far more circumspect when considering tangible things, as his discussion 'Brute Neighbors' in *Walden; or Life in the Woods*, published in 1854, suggests.

Thoreau writes of the animals that inhabit the woodland and its environs at Walden Pond just south of Concord, where he famously lived between 1845 and 1847 in a cabin he built himself. In an introductory comic dialogue between a Hermit (representing himself) and his visitor, a Poet (representing either Emerson or his friend, Ellery Channing), Thoreau parodies Idealism by abandoning meditation to go fishing, thereby suggesting that what is of value – spirit – is not to be found in the mind alone, but by direct experience of nature: within nature, not – as for Emerson – through it. As Richard Schneider points out: 'Once one recognizes this dualistic debate between the Transcendentalist and the naturalist in Thoreau's attitude, every natural object that he describes takes on a double meaning, one physical and one symbolic.'[31]

The dialogue concluded, Thoreau begins a new section of the chapter in his own authorial voice with the hortatory question: 'Why do precisely these objects which we behold make a world?'[32] I want to examine this question with a little care, attending to its precision: a precision that Thoreau's own use of the term 'precisely' might suggest is appropriate.

Thoreau writes of 'these objects which we behold' – these being the 'brute neighbors' that are the subject of the chapter. He begins with the 'mice which haunted my house', which 'were not the common ones, which are said to have been introduced into the country, but a wild native kind not found in the village'. He continues, 'I sent one to a distinguished naturalist, and it interested him much'. That distinguished naturalist was Louis Agassiz.

Thoreau then writes of birds – phoebes, robins, partridges, woodcock and turtle doves. There follows a detailed description of a battle between red and black ants, and how he took a wood chip on which a black ant was fighting two red ants into his cabin, where he placed it on a window sill beneath a tumbler, and studied the combat under what he calls a microscope, actually a single lens. He then describes the annual arrival in the autumn of the loon, and he concludes this chapter by describing in detail his study of its behaviour from his boat. He accomplishes all this with great precision, during which we should keep in mind his initial question: 'Why do precisely these objects which we behold make a world?'

We have read Thoreau's mentor, Emerson, write of the constitution of *the* world; but Thoreau, in contrast, uses the indefinite article, for he writes most precisely of '*a* world'. This signals a difference of conception that is all the difference in the world. Unlike Emerson, Thoreau does not assume the existence of a totality that exists as such, the spiritual character and meaning of which we might attempt to grasp in its entirety. Thoreau accedes to the principle of contingency, acknowledging multiple possible viewpoints – he sketches those of the Hermit and of the Poet specifically on this occasion in the introductory passage – and each of these viewpoints encompasses *a* world. We may as yet be far from Nelson Goodman's ways of world-making, but Thoreau's worlds are prismatic, and not necessarily wholly compatible and reconcilable in their aggregate entirety. They are *worlds*. Each world coheres by comprising its own selection of objects.

Thoreau engaged in such selection repeatedly, and in various registers: first, by means of observation and description (as in 'brute neighbors'); and, secondly, by means of collection. Thoreau collected in several categories; among them are Indigenous artefacts and animal specimens. Thoreau was constantly aware of the past presence in particular localities of Indigenous peoples. In his discussion of his bean-field in *Walden*, he notes 'in the course of the summer it appeared by the arrowheads which I turned up in hoeing, that an extinct nation had anciently dwelled here and planted corn and beans ere white men came to clear the land'.[33] Nathaniel Hawthorne, describing his own proclivity for gathering Indian artefacts on the land surrounding the Old Manse in Concord, admitted that Thoreau had first set him on the search, and that Thoreau had, in Hawthorne's words, 'a strange faculty of finding what the Indians have left behind them'.[34] Thoreau took a long-term interest in the many material remains of earlier inhabitants that he found over the decades, recording his observations and reflections in his journal. He expressed a profound respect for the Indigenous makers of lithic

projectile points and other implements: 'It is a matter of astonishment how the Indians ever made them with no iron or steel tools to work with – And I doubt whether one of our mechanics with all the aids of Yankee ingenuity could soon learn to copy one of the thousands under our feet.'[35] Thoreau knew from experience that fall ploughing and winter frost heaves turned up Indian implements, noting on finding three arrowheads on November 16, 1850, that '[t]he season for them began some time ago, as soon as farmers had sown their winter rye – but the spring after the melting of the snow is still better.'[36] He had amassed perhaps as many as 900 Indigenous artefacts by the time of his death.[37]

Thoreau's collecting in the field was not confined to human-made things, but ranged extensively over the natural world. His method combined non-invasive observation and non-destructive gathering. These are habits we may take for granted now, but they were novel enough in his day to warrant comment. His frequent walking companion and his first biographer, the poet Ellery Channing (1818–1901) – whom Thoreau likely parodied as the Poet in the 'Brute Neighbors' chapter of *Walden* – drew a distinction between Thoreau's procedures and the violent collecting that was then the norm:

> Hawks, ducks, sparrows, thrushes, and migrating warblers, in all their variety, he carefully perused with his field-glass – an instrument purchased with toilsome discretion, and carried in its own strong case and pocket. Thoreau named all the birds without a gun, a weapon he never used in mature years. He neither killed nor imprisoned any animal, unless driven by acute needs.[38]

This account deserves comment. The standard way of identifying birds at this time was to shoot them so that each dead body could be closely examined and the bird classified. Identification manuals were published to aid the ornithologist. Alexander Wilson's *American Ornithology* was first published in nine volumes between 1808 and 1814.[39] Its descriptions are based on the examination of dead birds, not the observation of living ones. Thoreau owned the single-volume 1852 edition.[40] In a journal entry in March 1853, Thoreau mused on the advantages of the spyglass over the gun:

> Would it not be well to carry a spy glass in order to watch these shy birds – such as ducks & hawks – ? In some respects methinks it would be better than a gun. The latter brings them nearer dead, but the former alive. You can identify the species better by killing the bird – because it was a dead specimen that was so minutely described – but you can study the habits & appearance best in the living specimen.[41]

He tried out a spyglass in June, and ten months later, in April 1854, bought his own for $8. He carried it with him constantly. Channing further noted that:

> His pockets were large enough to hold and keep not only his implements, but the large multitude of objects which he brought home from his walks; objects of all kinds, – pieces of wood or stone, lichens, seeds, nuts, apples, or whatever he had found for his uses. For he was a vigorous collector, never omitting to get and keep every possible thing in his direction of study.[42]

Thoreau squirrelled away his finds of all kinds in his attic study, as described by Channing:

> He tucked plants away in his soft hat in place of a botany-box. His study (a place in the garret) held its dry miscellany of botanical specimens; its corner of canes, its cases of eggs and lichens, and a weight of Indian arrow-heads and hatchets, besides a store of nuts, of which he was as fond as squirrels.[43]

What principles lay behind Thoreau's relentless practice of observation, description and collection? This was more than a set of habits he had acquired while an undergraduate at Harvard between 1833 and 1837, where he had been taught by the botanist, entomologist and librarian, Thaddeus William Harris (1795–1856); though, as his journal reveals, Thoreau maintained a personal relationship with Harris until the latter's death in 1856, visiting him regularly.[44] Thoreau was principally and unswervingly concerned with what Channing epitomised as the 'particular and definite'.

'The particular and definite were much to Thoreau,' Channing wrote in his 1873 memoir of the philosopher.[45] He made this remark in the course of an instructive episode in their friendship that occurred on 9 November 1851 during one of their regular walks. Describing it, Channing quotes Thoreau's manuscript journal entry, self-interestedly but understandably omitting Thoreau's more critical remarks about his friend. I quote the original passage from Thoreau's journal:

> In our walks C takes out his note-book some times & tries to write as I do – but all in vain. He soon puts it up again – or contents himself with scrawling some sketch of the landscape. Observing me still scribbling he will say that *he* confines himself to the ideal – purely ideal remarks – he leaves the facts to me. Sometimes too he will say a little petulantly – '*I* am universal. I have nothing to do with the particular and definite.'

> He is the moodiest person perhaps that I ever saw . . . I too would fain set down something beside facts. Facts should only be as the frame to my pictures – They should be material to the mythology which I am writing. Not facts to assist men to make money – farmers to farm profitably in any common sense. Facts to tell who I am – and where I have been – or what I have thought . . . My facts shall all be falsehoods to the common sense. I would so state facts that they shall be significant shall be myths or mythologic. Facts which the mind perceived – thoughts which the body thought with these I deal – I too cherish vague and misty forms – vaguest when the cloud at which I gaze is dissipated quite & nought but the skyey depths are seen.[46]

The particular and definite, as they constitute a world, whether of botany, zoology, geology or the history of Indigenous peoples, are, in Thoreau's estimate, significant not in themselves, but only insofar as they are what he terms 'mythologic'. They overturn received opinion; they are 'falsehoods to the common sense'. Yet the pictures he would make had to be framed by facts. Channing reported: 'His habit was to go abroad a portion of each day, to fields or woods or the Concord River. "I go out," he said, "to see what I have caught in my traps which I set for facts."' As Channing perceptively summarised Thoreau's purpose: 'He looked to fabricate an epitome of creation, and give us a homœopathy of Nature.'[47]

Thoreau's mature reflections on the character of scientific inquiry in the 'Friday' chapter of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, published in 1849, reveal that its basis is observation rather than experiment, but not observation that might cause distraction by the mere incremental accumulation of facts. He writes:

> Observation is so wide awake, and facts are being so rapidly added to the sum of human experience, that it appears as if the theorizer would always be in arrears, and were doomed forever to arrive at imperfect conclusions; but the power to perceive a law is equally rare in all ages of the world, and depends but little on the number of facts observed.[48]

Thoreau qualifies this undertaking in two ways. First, that power to perceive a law is peculiarly dependent on the *experience* of the scientist. As he expresses it: 'How can we *know* what we are *told* merely? Each man can interpret another's experience only by his own.'[49] Secondly, for Thoreau the perception of scientific laws is above all a moral undertaking: 'The laws of

Nature are the purest morality.'[50] This is why they are part of what he would later come to denote as the 'mythologic'. Thanks to his preoccupation with the particular and the definite, Thoreau has thought his way back through Emerson's Transcendentalism to its roots in Kant. For Kant thinks that *the* world as a whole is not knowable by us. The universal laws we believe to operate in Nature originate in ourselves ('*I* am the universal'), and that demand for the universal is inseparable from the foundations of morality within us. The quality of the 'mythologic' therefore holds in tension the double meanings of things derived from Transcendentalist Idealism imbibed especially from Emerson, on the one hand, and attention to things in themselves as constituents of *a* world – a significant but not knowably all-encompassing unity – on the other. One means by which Thoreau negotiated this tension was by adopting the prophetic mode that Stanley Cavell so perceptively discerns in Thoreau's most uncompromisingly apodictic text, *Walden*.[51]

For both Agassiz and Thoreau, the collection and extremely detailed examination of tangible things was essential and inevasible. While Agassiz was relentlessly gathering specimens for the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Thoreau continued to collect, too. He had long been gathering material on the Indigenous inhabitants of North America. He compiled what was to become a series of twelve manuscript notebooks, now in the J. Pierpont Morgan Library, under the title *Extracts Relating to the Indians*, most likely with a book in mind that he did not live to write.[52] He gathered information first-hand about Indian ways during his expeditions with Indigenous guides to wilderness areas of northern Maine in 1846, 1853 and 1857; and to Minnesota in 1861 to meet with the Dakota peoples.[53] But Thoreau, suffering from tuberculosis, died at the age of 44 the following year. As a scientist, as in everything else, Thoreau had remained an outsider, beyond institutional enclosure. However, like his teacher Thaddeus William Harris, he was a member of the Boston Society of Natural History, founded in 1830. To this body he not only donated specimens during his lifetime, but also bequeathed his natural history and Indigenous artefact collections. The bequest took effect on Thoreau's death in 1862, which was the year the society began building its new museum.[54]

Just four years later, in 1866, the London-based banker George Peabody donated funds for a museum and professorship in American archaeology and ethnology to Harvard. This led to the construction in 1869 of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology as an extension to the building housing Agassiz's Museum of Comparative Zoology.[55] The first

curator of the Peabody Museum was Jeffries Wyman (1814–74), Hersey Professor of Anatomy at Harvard since 1847, and president of the Boston Society for Natural History since 1854.[56] In 1866, Wyman chose the position at the new Harvard museum over the directorship of the newly built New England Museum of Natural History, founded by the Boston Society of Natural History. The society thereupon took advantage of the founding of the Peabody Museum to divest itself of its archaeological materials. These were sent with Wyman to the new Harvard museum. Among the materials from the Boston Society of Natural History that Wyman received into the new Peabody Museum was the group of Indian materials left by Thoreau. The museum received them on the completion of its new building in 1869.

As Steven Conn has demonstrated, soon after the beginning of the twentieth century, museums lost much of their academic authority – in natural history and anthropology, if not in the study of art – to universities, where scholars attended to intangibles.[57] Three major museums were founded in Boston and Cambridge in the ten years between 1859 and 1869: the Museum of Comparative Zoology, the New England Museum of Natural History of the Boston Society of Natural History (now the Museum of Science), and the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. All three in their various ways instantiated forms of scholarship that held in various degrees of tension principles derived both from Idealism and an urge to observe the world – or worlds – closely by gathering materials for further methodical, empirical study that might reveal underlying principles of organisation. Two of the men responsible for this local development, which had national implications, knew each other, though their educations, fields of interest and attitudes could scarcely have been more different from one another. One is an acknowledged founding figure of American museum scholarship: Louis Agassiz. The other, Henry David Thoreau, is scarcely associated with museum scholarship, despite having employed collecting as a vital aspect of his philosophical inquiry, and despite his collection of Indigenous artefacts having contributed to the formation of a leading anthropology museum. The ripples of these forms of inquiry radiated from Cambridge before fading in the early twentieth century, although all three museums – the Museum of Comparative Zoology, the Science Museum and the Peabody – continue to exist. George Brown Goode's 1895 taxonomy of taxonomies, *Principles of Museum Administration*, was in effect a last hurrah for the then as yet scarcely challenged scholarly authority of collecting institutions. And George Brown

Goode was a Harvard graduate, an ichthyologist by training, a student of none other than Louis Agassiz.

## Notes

1. Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876–1926* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
2. For an excellent study that focuses on Philadelphia collecting institutions, the reader is referred to Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life*.
3. Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Experience', in *The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: Modern Library, 1992), 309.
4. Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life*.
5. George Brown Goode, *The Principles of Museum Administration* (New York: Coultas & Volans, 1895), 22.
6. Louis Agassiz, *Recherches sur les poissons fossiles*, 5 vols. (Neuchâtel: Petitpierre, 1833–43).
7. Louis Agassiz, *Études sur les glaciers* (Neuchâtel: Jent & Gassmann, 1840).
8. Louis Agassiz, 'Autobiographical review of school and university life', in Elizabeth Cary Agassiz (ed.), *Louis Agassiz: his life and correspondence*, 2 vols., 5th edn (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1885), I, 150–1.
9. Edward Lurie, *Louis Agassiz: a life in science* (University of Chicago Press, 1960), 51.
10. *Ibid.*
11. John Smith, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch, Flemish, and French Painters*, 9 vols. (London: Smith & Son, 1829–42).
12. Harvard University Archives, illustrated in Nancy Pick, *The Rarest of the Rare: Stories Behind the Treasures at the Harvard Museum of Natural History* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 14.
13. Lurie, *Agassiz*, 60.
14. The literature on the Transcendentalists is enormous. For a good outline, see Carlos Baker, *Emerson among the Eccentrics: a group portrait* (New York: Viking, 1996).
15. Richard Smith, 'Thoreau's first year at Walden in fact and fiction', delivered at the Thoreau Society Annual Gathering, 14 July 2007, available at: http://thoreau.eserver.org/smith.html, accessed 27 November 2010.
16. Lurie, *Agassiz*, 146.
17. For example, the fold-out plate of the jellyfish *Cyanea arctica* by Auguste Sonrel after Jaques Burkhardt.
18. Jeffries Wyman to Joseph Leidy, 28 May 1868, Joseph Leidy Papers, Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, quoted in Lurie, *Agassiz*, 368.
19. *The Autobiography of Joseph Le Conte*, ed. William Dallam Armes (New York: Appleton, 1903), 128–9. Cf. Isaac Lea, *Observations on the Genus Unio, together with Descriptions of New Genera and Species*, 13 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: the Author, 1834–74).
20. Baker, *Emerson among the Eccentrics*, 494–5.
21. *Ibid.*, 426.
22. Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2001), 125–8.

23. A. Hunter Dupree, *Asa Gray, 1810–1888* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 323.
24. Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, 120.
25. Houghton Library holds photostat copies of a series of sixty letters from Agassiz to Dom Pedro II written between 1866 and 1873, the originals being in the Museu Imperial de Petrópolis, Brazil.
26. Louis Agassiz and Elizabeth Carey Agassiz, *A Journey in Brazil* (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1868), 245. The woodcut illustration (p. 245) is after a portrait drawing of Alexandrina by William James. Elizabeth Agassiz's description of Alexandrina occurs in the course of describing the departure of the expedition from Tefé (which they spell Teffé).
27. William James to Henry James, Sr, 12–17 September 1865, William James Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, quoted in Lurie, *Agassiz*, 347.
28. William James drawings, Houghton Library, Harvard University, MS Am 1092.2. See also *Brazil through the Eyes of William James: letters, diaries, and drawings, 1865–1866*, ed. Maria Helena P. T. Machado (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2006).
29. Robert Brandom, 'From German Idealism to American Pragmatism – and back', The Williams James Centennial Lecture, delivered at Harvard University, 3 December 2010. For James, see, in particular, his essay, 'The will to believe' (a rejoinder to William Clifford), published in 1896, and reprinted in *The Ethics of Belief Debate*, Gerald D. McCarthy (ed.) (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), 55–72. See also William James, *Pragmatism: a new name for some old ways of thinking* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1907).
30. Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'The American scholar', in Brooks Atkinson (ed.), *The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Modern Library, 1992), 57–8.
31. Richard J. Schneider, 'Walden', in Joel Myerson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Henry David Thoreau* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 100.
32. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings of Henry David Thoreau*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: Modern Library, 1992), 212.
33. Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, 147.
34. Nathaniel Hawthorne, 'The Old Manse', in *Mosses from an Old Manse*, vol. 1 (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1884), 19.
35. Journal entry for 30 October 1842; part of a lengthy consideration of Indian lithic tools: Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, ed. John C. Broderick, *Volume 2: 1842–1848*, ed. Robert Sattelmeyer (Princeton University Press, 1984), 58–9.
36. Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, ed. John C. Broderick, *Volume 3: 1848–1851*, eds. Robert Sattelmeyer, Mark R. Patterson and William Rossi (Princeton University Press, 1990), 140.
37. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden: a fully annotated edition*, ed. Jeffrey S. Cramer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 151 n. 12.
38. William Ellery Channing, *Thoreau the Poet-Naturalist with Memorial Verses*, ed. F. B. Sanborn (Boston, MA: Charles E. Goodspeed, 1902), 265. For Thoreau's initial reservations about the use of a spyglass, and his acquisition of one in 1854 and use thereof, see David F. Wood, *An Observant Eye: the Thoreau collection at the Concord Museum* (Concord, MA: Concord Museum, 1996), 51–3.

39. Alexander Wilson, *American Ornithology, or, The Natural History of the Birds of the United States: illustrated with plates engraved and colored from original drawings taken from Nature*, 9 vols., ed. George Ord (Philadelphia, PA: Bradford & Inskeep, 1808–14), vols. 8 and 9.
40. *Wilson's American Ornithology, with Notes by Jardine, to which is Added a Synopsis of American Birds, Including those Described by Bonaparte, Audubon, Nuttall, and Richardson*, ed. Thomas M. Brewer (New York: H. S. Samuels, 1852).
41. Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, ed. Robert Sattelmeyer, *Volume 6: 1853*, eds. Leonard N. Neufeldt and Nancy Craig (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 48.
42. Channing, *Thoreau*, 66.
43. *Ibid.*
44. See Clark A. Elliott, *Thaddeus William Harris (1795–1856): nature, science, and society in the life of an American naturalist* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2008).
45. Channing, *Thoreau*, 66.
46. Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, ed. Robert Sattelmeyer, *Volume 4: 1851–1852*, eds. Leonard N. Neufeldt and Nancy Craig Simmons (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 170–1.
47. Channing, *Thoreau*, 65.
48. Henry David Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers; Walden, or Life in the Woods; The Maine Woods; Cape Cod*, Library of America 28 (New York: Viking, 1985), 296.
49. *Ibid.* (original emphases).
50. *Ibid.*, 294.
51. Stanley Cavell, *The Senses of Walden* (New York: Viking Press, 1972).
52. See Richard F. Fleck, 'Henry David Thoreau as cultural anthropologist: the Indian notebooks', Suite 101.com (10 November 2009), available at: http://suite101.com/article/henry-david-thoreau-as-cultural-anthropologist-a168099, accessed 6 December 2010; Richard F. Fleck, *The Indians of Thoreau: selections from the Indian notebooks* (Albuquerque, NM: Hummingbird Press, 1974); Richard F. Fleck, *Selections from the 'Indian Notebooks' (1847–1861) of Henry D. Thoreau* (online edition, Lincoln, MA: The Thoreau Institute at Walden Woods, 2007), available at: www.walden.org/documents/file/Library/Thoreau/writings/Notebooks/IndianNotebooks.pdf, accessed 6 December 2010; Robert F. Sayre, *Thoreau and the American Indians* (Princeton University Press, 1977).
53. See Henry David Thoreau, *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau, vol. III: the Maine Woods* (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin, 1906). See also Timothy Troy, 'Ktaadn: Thoreau the anthropologist', *Dialectical Anthropology* 15(1) (1990), 74–81.
54. Richard I. Johnson, 'The rise and fall of the Boston society of natural history', *Northeastern Naturalist* 11(1) (2004), 81–108.
55. Franklin Parker, *George Peabody: a biography* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1995). See also Curtis M. Hinsley, 'The museum origins of Harvard anthropology, 1866–1915', in Clarke A. Elliott and Margaret W. Rossiter (eds.), *Science at Harvard University: historical perspectives* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1992), 121–45.
56. Toby A. Appel, 'A scientific career in the age of character: Jeffries Wyman and natural history at Harvard', in Clarke A. Elliott and Margaret W. Rossiter (eds.), *Science at Harvard University*, 96–120.
57. Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life*.

13

# Hegel, Danto and the 'end of art'

Stephen Houlgate

Hegel's idea of the 'end of art' has been a topic of ongoing discussion in the philosophy of art since his death in 1831. Two of the twentieth century's greatest philosophers, Heidegger and Adorno, both developed interpretations of art that engage directly with this idea.[1] The person who appears to embrace the idea most enthusiastically, however, is Arthur Danto, who has even described himself as a 'born-again Hegelian'.[2] Yet how much impact has Hegel had on Danto's philosophy of art and of the history of art?

## 1. Hegel and the 'end of art'[3]

Hegel identifies three ways in which art may be said to come to an 'end'. First, he maintains 'art has its end in the comic',[a] especially the comedy of Aristophanes.[4] Art gives expression to the truth through particular, *finite* shapes, images or sounds. The comic character, however, shows his freedom 'from the content and forms of finitude'[b,5] by laughing at his own foibles and at the frustration of his particular aims. In so doing, he manifests a profound sense of inner reconciliation and satisfaction: 'the absolute freedom of the heart'.[c] Such freedom is human and worldly; yet it points forward to *religion* because it is an inner freedom attained by *letting go* of what is finite.[6] Comedy brings art to a logical – though not historical – end, therefore, by pointing beyond art to religion in Hegel's philosophical system.

a. 'Im Komischen hat die Kunst ihr Ende', G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst*, ed. Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2003), 311. [hereafter VPK] [All translations from VPK by SH]
b. 'Vom Gehalt und den Formen der Endlichkeit', Hegel, HW, xv, 573.
c. 'Die absolute Freiheit des Gemütes', Hegel, VPK, 310.

Secondly, Hegel claims, the modern age witnesses the historical 'disintegration' (*Zerfallen*) of art.[7] This occurs at 'the conclusion of romantic art' in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[d,8] Art disintegrates by falling apart into, on the one hand, 'subjective humour' (*der subjektive Humor*) and, on the other hand, the bare representation of prosaic, everyday life.

Subjective humour is exemplified by the work of the novelist and ironist Jean Paul Richter.[9] The genuine artist, Hegel contends, aims to make what is truly essential '*objective* to himself',[e,10] to give objective sensuous expression to his inner freedom. The ironic humorist, by contrast, shows us the '*dissolution* of that which begins to become objective',[f] the 'most colourfully chaotic jumbling of things, whose relation is thoroughly *subjective*'.[g,11] In Hegel's view, therefore, such a humorist does not produce any genuine work of *art*, but simply lets us see his unconstrained ironic subjectivity at play. 'When the subject lets himself go in this way', Hegel says, 'art stops, art is thereby at its limit. Humorous works' – of this subjective, ironic kind – 'can no longer be called works of art.'[h]

In addition to such subjective humour, romantic art also culminates in works that have become too objective. These are works whose principal aim is not the display of subjectivity, but the 'presentation of objects as they are' or the simple 'imitation of nature'.[i,12] As Hegel is aware, the idea that art's true task is the imitation of nature has been popular throughout Western history.[13] (As we shall see, Danto believes that this idea governed painting roughly from the beginning of the fourteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, and that Hegel is himself 'fixated' on the 'paradigm of mimesis'.[14]) For Hegel, however, the true aim of art is not the imitation of nature, but the sensuous expression of *spirit* – of divine and human freedom – in the form of *beauty*.[15]

This raises the following philosophical question: when works merely imitate nature and everyday life, 'are they works of art?'.[j] Hegel admits that they are art works 'in the abstract, general sense'; but he adds that, 'if one speaks of art in the philosophical sense', the content must be one that is

d. 'Dem Schlusse der romantischen Kunst', Hegel, HW, xiv, 231.
e. 'Dies wahrhaft Wesentliche sich objektiv zu machen', Hegel, HW, xiv, 233. [emphasis added SH]
f. 'Auflösung dessen, was objektiv zu werden beginnt', Hegel, VPK, 202. [emphasis added SH]
g. 'Dem kunterbuntesten Durcheinanderwürfeln von Gegenständen, deren Beziehung etwas durchaus Subjektives ist', Hegel, HW, xiv, 230. [emphasis added SH]
h. 'Wenn das Subjekt sich so selbst gehen läßt, so hört damit die Kunst auf, die Kunst ist damit am Rande. Humoristische Werke kann man nicht mehr Kunstwerke nennen.' Hegel, PKA, 153.
i. 'Darstellung der Gegenstände, wie sie sind'; 'Nachahmung der Natur', Hegel, VPK, 199.
j. 'Sind das Kunstwerke?'

'true and substantial in and for itself'.[k] Works that merely imitate things cannot be art works in the *philosophical* sense, therefore, since the latter must present the substance of spirit, namely, freedom, in the form of beauty. Purely imitative artists produce 'bits of artistry' (*Kunststücke*) – or, translated more pejoratively, 'tricks' – but they do not produce genuine 'works of art' (*Kunstwerke*).[16]

Since neither works of subjective, ironic humour, nor those that merely imitate nature, are genuine art works, art as such comes to an end with the 'dissolution' (*Auflösung*) of romantic art.[17] Yet Hegel insists that art still has a future after this end: for the dissolution of romantic art paves the way for a new pluralism in art by finally liberating it from the 'art-forms' (*Kunstformen*) that have previously governed its history.[18] Prior to this, art is either symbolic, classical or romantic in character, each form of art having its own guiding ideas and manner of presentation. Classical art supplants symbolic art and is then supplanted in turn by romantic art. After the romantic form of art has been dissolved, however, art is no longer bound to any specific content or form. Artists can draw, as they see fit, on their 'store of images, modes of configuration', and even on 'earlier forms of art',[l,19] in order to create new works. As Hegel puts it, art is now regarded as 'a *free* instrument which the artist can wield in proportion to his subjective skill in relation to *any* material of whatever kind'.[m,20]

Here Hegel foreshadows Danto's celebration of the radical pluralism ushered in by Pop art in the 1960s.[21] There is, however, a significant difference between them, of which Danto is well aware. For Hegel, in contrast to Danto, not everything can now become a subject for art or a work of art, for modern artistic pluralism is subject to a limiting condition imposed by the concept of art itself. This condition is the following: every 'matter' (*Stoff*) may be taken up as a subject for art, 'if only it does not contradict the *formal law of being simply beautiful* and capable of artistic treatment'.[n,22]

This does not mean that modern art must be beautiful in the classical sense, but that *something* of the ideal of beauty has to be preserved if modern

k. 'Im abstrakten, allgemeinen Sinne'; 'Wenn man im philosophischen Sinn von der Kunst spricht, muss wohl [der] Gehalt . . . ein wahrhafter, substantieller an und für sich [sein].' Hegel, PKA, 151.

l. 'Vorrat von Bildern, Gestaltungsweisen, früheren Kunstformen', Hegel, HW, XIV, 235.

m. 'Ein freies Instrument . . . , das er nach Maßgabe seiner subjektiven Geschicklichkeit in bezug auf jeden Inhalt, welcher Art er auch sei, gleichmäßig handhaben kann', Hegel, HW, XIV, 235. [emphasis added]

n. 'Wenn er nur dem formellen Gesetz, überhaupt schön und einer künstlerischen Behandlung fähig zu sein, nicht widerspricht', Hegel, HW, XIV, 235 [emphasis added SH], and VPK, 204.

art is to count as genuine *art*. So what does Hegel have in mind? First, the principal subject matter of modern art in the age of pluralism must continue to be *humanity*, since human beings, for Hegel, manifest spiritual freedom most fully.[23] Such art 'makes *Humanus* its new holy of holies: i.e. the depths and heights of the human heart as such, the universally human in its joys and sorrows, its strivings, deeds and fates'.[o,24]

Secondly, not everything that human beings experience may be included, or given prominence, in works of art, if they are to remain in some sense beautiful and ideal. Genuine art, for Hegel, remains the sensuous expression of human vitality and freedom, even after the dissolution of the romantic form of art. The (as Hegel sees it) weakness of character that consists in being at the mercy of 'dark powers' (*dunkle Mächte*) within the soul – or of a dream, as in the case of Kleist's Prinz Friedrich von Homburg – thus has no place in genuine art, because it is at odds with the 'unity and firmness of character'[p,25] demanded by the aesthetic ideal. 'The truly ideal character', Hegel maintains, 'has for its content and pathos nothing other-worldly and ghost-ridden but only actual interests in which he is at one with himself'[q,26] – a statement that makes it hard to imagine Hegel embracing much modern drama or literature after Nietzsche and Freud, or much modern painting after Picasso.

If we want to see what ideal character might look like after the dissolution of the romantic form of art, we should turn, not to Romantics (with a capital R), such as Jean Paul or E. T. A. Hoffmann, but to painters, such as Murillo or the Dutch masters, whose work pre-dates that dissolution but explores, among other things, the subtle beauties of everyday life. The beggar boys depicted in Murillo's paintings in Munich are by no means ideal in the classical sense, but, Hegel contends, the 'freedom from care' they exhibit is 'what the concept of the Ideal requires'.[r,27] Similarly ideal, in Hegel's view, is the feeling of freedom, gaiety and 'spiritual cheerfulness' (*geistige Heiterkeit*) that suffuses seventeenth-century pictures of 'the Dutch in their taverns, at weddings and dances, at feasting and drinking . . . even if matters come to quarrels and blows'.[s,28]

o. 'Zu ihrem neuen Heiligen den *Humanus* macht, die Tiefen und Höhen des menschlichen Gemüts als solchen, das Allgemeinmenschliche in seinen Freuden und Leiden, seinen Bestrebungen, Taten und Schicksalen', Hegel, HW, xiv, 237–8, and VPK, 204.

p. 'Einheit und Festigkeit des Charakters', Hegel, HW, xiii, 314–15.

q. 'Der wahrhaft ideale Charakter hat nichts Jenseitiges und Gespensterhaftes, sondern wirkliche Interessen, in welchen er bei sich selbst ist, zu seinem Gehalte und Pathos.' Hegel, HW, xiii, 315.

r. 'Kummerlosigkeit . . . , welche der Begriff des Idealen erheischt', Hegel, HW, xiii, 224.

s. 'Den Holländern . . . in ihren Schenken, bei Hochzeiten und Tänzen, beim Schmausen und Trinken . . . , wenn's auch zu Zänkereien und Schlägen kommt', Hegel, HW, xiii, 223.

Modern art, for Hegel, can, indeed, be pluralistic as never before; yet if it is still to count as *art*, and is to fulfil art's intrinsic function, it cannot encompass anything and everything in the way Danto describes. If it is to remain the sensuous expression of spiritual freedom, it must depict what is '*living* in the human breast' and 'everything in which humanity as such is capable of being *at home*',[t,29] as opposed to what is abstract, dissonant, alienated or simply ugly. Modern pluralism, for Hegel, does not mean, as it will do for Danto, that art is liberated from all artistic imperatives: for art is still governed by the imperative, grounded in the concept of art itself, that it be *beautiful*.

The third sense in which art comes to a kind of end is due to the development, not just of romantic art, but of spirit as a whole, including religion. As a consequence of this development of spirit, Hegel maintains, in the modern age 'art no longer affords that satisfaction of spiritual needs which earlier ages and nations sought in it, and found in it alone'.[u,30] Art no longer satisfies us in the way it satisfied the Greeks, because art for us is not, as it was for them, the highest mode in which truth finds expression.[31] This, in turn, means that art can now no longer fulfil its *own* 'highest vocation' (*höchste Bestimmung*).[32]

Art fulfils its highest vocation, Hegel claims, when, in company with religion and philosophy, it expresses 'the *divine*, the deepest interests of mankind, and the most comprehensive truths of the spirit'.[v,33] Indeed, art's highest task is actually to provide the most adequate expression of such truths itself. Art was able to fulfil this task for the Greeks, because their religion was itself an aesthetic religion: the Olympian gods were conceived as beautiful, heroic individuals whose natural home, as it were, is in art.[34]

With Christianity, Hegel contends, things are different: God is conceived, not as a beautiful individual, but as '*self-conscious inwardness*', and He is believed to be 'living and present' within the subjective consciousness of humanity.[w,35] Christianity is thus not as favourable to art as Greek religion was. Yet the fact that God becomes *incarnate* in the figure of Christ means that the divine manifests itself in the human body, too; and this in turn means that *art* wins 'the higher right of turning the human form, and the mode of

t. 'In der Menschenbrust lebendig'; 'alles, worin der Mensch überhaupt heimisch zu sein die Befähigung hat', Hegel, HW, XIV, 238. [emphasis added SH]

u. 'Die Kunst nicht mehr diejenige Befriedigung der geistigen Bedürfnisse gewährt, welche frühere Zeiten und Völker in ihr gesucht und nur in ihr gefunden haben', Hegel, HW, XIII, 24.

v. 'Das *Göttliche*, die tiefsten Interessen des Menschen, die umfassendsten Wahrheiten des Geistes', Hegel, HW, XIII, 20–1.

w. '*Selbstbewußte Innerlichkeit*'; 'lebendig und präsent', Hegel, HW, XIII, 112, 116.

externality in general, into an expression of the absolute'.[x,36] Christianity thus gives rise to art that gives visible expression to the profound inwardness of divine love, most famously in the later medieval and Renaissance paintings of the Madonna and Christ Child that Hegel revered so much.[37]

Things change again with the Reformation and the emergence of a new, Protestant form of Christianity.[38] In contrast to Catholicism, Protestantism does not look specifically to art to express its truths, but withdraws more radically into the inwardness of faith. This does not altogether preclude the creation of Protestant religious art, but it means that, in the wake of the Reformation, art is emancipated from religion to an increasing degree and becomes more secular.[39] Indeed, our whole attitude to the art of the present and the past changes: we no longer 'venerate' (*verehren*) works of art as manifestations of the divine or 'bend our knee' (*unser Knie beugen*) before them, as earlier ages did, but we regard them precisely as works of *art*, as products of human creativity.[40]

Protestantism has a further effect on the development of secular art itself. On the one hand, it promotes a growing interest in subjectivity and so contributes to the emergence of subjective humour. On the other hand, it promotes an interest in the prosaic details of everyday life, because 'to Protestantism alone the important thing is to get a sure footing in the prose of life . . . and to let it develop in unrestricted freedom'.[y,41] Protestantism, in Hegel's view, thus helps to bring about the dissolution of the romantic form of art we considered above.

Protestantism also fosters the development of a 'culture of reflection' (*Reflexionsbildung*) in modernity.[42] A cornerstone of Lutheran doctrine, according to Hegel, is that authority in matters of religious truth resides not with the Catholic Church, but with 'the *Bible* and the witness of the human spirit'.[z] On the basis of the Bible, Hegel maintains, 'each individual is now to be able to instruct *himself*' and 'each is to be able to determine *his* conscience'.[aa,43] This, in turn, gives impetus to the idea that authority in matters of secular truth resides with one's *own* thought and reflection. According to Hegel, therefore, the freedom of religious conscience promoted by

x. 'Das höhere Recht, die menschliche Gestalt und Weise der Äußerlichkeit überhaupt zum Ausdruck des Absoluten zu verwenden', Hegel, HW, xiv, 131.

y. 'Dem Protestantismus allein kommt es zu, sich auch ganz in die Prosa des Lebens einzunisten und sie . . . sich in unbeschränkter Freiheit ausbilden zu lassen', Hegel, HW, xiv, 225–6.

z. 'Die *Bibel* und das Zeugnis des menschlichen Geistes'.

aa. 'Jeder soll sich nun selbst daraus belehren, jeder sein Gewissen daraus bestimmen können', Hegel, HW, xii, 497. [emphasis added SH]

Lutheran Protestantism indirectly promotes the freedom of reflection that we associate with the Enlightenment.[44]

The high regard we moderns have for reflective thought means that 'thought and reflection have spread their wings above fine art'.[bb,45] One consequence of this turn towards reflection is that 'what is now aroused in us by works of art is not just immediate enjoyment but our judgement also'.[cc,46] In Hegel's view, we moderns still derive 'immediate enjoyment' from art; yet at the same time art now prompts us, more than was the case in earlier periods of history, to formulate critical judgements about the works we encounter.

Indeed, art now prompts us to go further and develop a scientific – that is, *philosophical* – understanding of art: 'art invites us to thoughtful consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing scientifically what art is'.[dd,47] Note that art invites us to philosophise about its nature, not just – as is the case with purely imitative art – because of what *it* is, but because *we* are now primarily reflective, thinking beings, for whom philosophical science is the highest form of knowledge, and thus a greater 'need' (*Bedürfnis*) than in the days when art took centre stage.[48]

The fact that we moderns look to philosophy, and thoughtful reflection more generally, to disclose the truth means that we no longer regard art as the highest expression of the truth. In our religious lives, too, we look (or, at least, should look) to the inwardness of faith, rather than to art, for the deepest understanding of our place in the world. For Hegel, therefore, 'the spirit of our world today, or, more particularly, of our religion and the development of our reason, appears as beyond the stage at which art is the supreme mode of our knowledge of the absolute'.[ee,49] Accordingly, 'art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of *the past*'.[ff,50] This is the third sense in which art may be said to come to an 'end'.

This does not mean, however, as Danto claims, that Hegel believes art in the future will be no more than a 'luxury'.[51] The fact that art ceases to be

bb. 'Der Gedanke und die Reflexion hat die schöne Kunst überflügelt', Hegel, HW, XIII, 24.

cc. 'Was durch Kunstwerke jetzt in uns erregt wird, ist außer dem unmittelbaren Genuß zugleich unser Urteil', Hegel, HW, XIII, 25.

dd. 'Die Kunst lädt uns zur denkenden Betrachtung ein, und zwar nicht zu dem Zwecke, Kunst wieder hervorzurufen, sondern, was die Kunst sei, wissenschaftlich zu erkennen', Hegel, HW, XIII, 26.

ee. 'Erscheint der Geist unserer heutigen Welt, oder näher unserer Religion und unserer Vernunftbildung, als über die Stufe hinaus, auf welcher die Kunst die höchste Weise ausmacht, sich des Absoluten bewußt zu sein', Hegel, HW, XIII, 24.

ff. 'Ist und bleibt die Kunst nach der Seite ihrer höchsten Bestimmung für uns ein Vergangenes', Hegel, HW, XIII, 25. [emphasis added SH]

our highest need does not mean that it ceases to be a need altogether. Art will never again meet the *highest* needs of humanity (unless we regress to the level of the Greeks); but it can continue to meet our real and enduring *need* for aesthetic self-understanding by exploring the richness of human life and freedom, and it can continue thereby to fulfil the intrinsic function of art by being beautiful. Indeed, Hegel entertains the hope 'that art will always rise higher and come to perfection'.[gg,52]

## II. Danto and Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*

Danto acknowledges that his own thoughts on the 'end of art' are profoundly indebted to Hegel's.[53] What first aroused his overall interest in the philosophy of art, however, was not Hegel's philosophy, but an event in the history of art itself.

As is well known, Danto was awoken from his dogmatic slumber by Andy Warhol's exhibition at the Stable Gallery on East 74th Street, New York in the spring of 1964.[54] At this exhibition, Warhol displayed his now famous *Brillo Boxes*, approximately one hundred replicas of commercial Brillo boxes. The latter were items of commercial art, but they were produced to be objects of utility – to transport Brillo pads around the country – not to be displayed in an art gallery. Warhol's boxes, by contrast, were intended to be, and were (for the most part) accepted as, fine art.[55]

Whereas the commercial boxes were made of corrugated cardboard, Warhol's boxes were made of wood, painted white and then silk-screened to look *just like* their commercial counterparts. There were certainly some visible differences between the two sets of boxes – Warhol left splashes of paint on his boxes that would not have been tolerated on the commercial ones – but to the casual observer the boxes were indistinguishable; and, as Danto notes, Warhol *could* have removed the minor blemishes from his boxes to make them look exactly like the originals.[56]

By producing works of fine art that were, or could just as well have been, visually indistinguishable from ordinary objects of utility, Warhol, in Danto's view, broke down the barrier between art and ordinary life.[57] Specifically, he showed that works of fine art do not have to look different from ordinary objects in order to be art works. Indeed, the revolutionary message of Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* is that 'there is no particular way that art has to look', that art has no distinctive look of its own.[58]

gg. 'Daß die Kunst immer mehr steigen und sich vollenden werde', Hegel, HW, XIII, 142.

This in turn means that one cannot tell that *Brillo Boxes* are works of art simply by looking at them. So how do we tell that they are art works? Where does the difference lie between two visually indiscernible objects, one of which is an art work and the other not? This is the *philosophical* question that Danto believes was raised by Warhol's exhibition. Danto claims, indeed, that this is the '*true* philosophical question' concerning art, because only philosophy can answer it.[59]

If someone asks us 'what is art?', we might reply by simply pointing to an example – say, the *Mona Lisa* – and stating that *this* is art. The example, we might think, lets everyone see what art is without our having to give a philosophical definition of it. Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* show, however, that there is not always a visible difference between art works and ordinary objects. Since Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* and commercial Brillo boxes look alike, the difference between them, in Danto's view, must be *conceptual*, a difference that thought alone – in the form of philosophy – can clarify. Unlike previous art works, therefore, Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* force us to abandon the idea that one can 'understand the difference between art and reality in purely visual terms', and require us to seek a philosophical understanding of art's nature.[60]

Danto recognises, by the way, that Warhol's achievement was not unique in the late 1950s and early 1960s: Roy Lichtenstein, the Minimalists and (in music) John Cage all made art that raised the 'proper philosophical question' about art. Warhol's art, however, raised that question in the most eye-catching way: it was the clearest *example* of art that showed us 'that the meaning of art cannot be taught by examples', but requires philosophical clarification.[61]

Note that Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* require us to explain what makes *any* work of art a work of art rather than a mere thing, even if the object in question – unlike *Brillo Boxes* – looks just like what we have always taken art to be. The reason why is that Warhol forces us to recognise that 'it is always possible to imagine objects indiscernible from given works of art' that are not works of art themselves. One can imagine, for example, paint being poured into a centrifuge, spinning around and ending up looking exactly like Rembrandt's *Polish Rider*.[62] One could, of course, have imagined such cases before Warhol, but Warhol's work now makes it necessary to imagine them. That means that after Warhol it is no longer possible to tell that anything is a work of art just by *looking* at it. What we now need, therefore, is a philosophical definition that will explain why every work of art is a work of art, a definition that is wholly universal. For Danto, a development in the *history* of art has

thus made the philosophical search for a universal, *ahistorical* definition of art necessary.

## III. Danto's philosophy of art

Though Warhol raised the question of art in its proper philosophical form, Danto takes on the task of answering it. To cut a long story short, Danto maintains that art works are to be understood as '*embodied meanings*'.[63] Two objects may look exactly alike, yet what makes one of them an art work is the fact that it embodies an idea or meaning and is not just a bare thing – the fact that it possesses 'a kind of soul' that the other object lacks.[64] Danto concedes that objects of utility also have a meaning, but he identifies that meaning with the *use* to which such objects are put: 'as a garment', he writes, 'the meaning of a wedding dress is its use: it is worn to be married in'.[65] The meaning of a work of art, by contrast, is what the work is *about*, the idea that constitutes its *content* or animating soul.[66] A urinal is something to be used when nature calls, but it becomes a work of art – such as Duchamp's *Fountain* – when its principal purpose is to embody and express an idea, such as the idea that art works do not need to be beautiful to be art works.[67] Insofar as all art embodies an invisible idea, all art, for Danto, is 'conceptual art (with a small *c*)'.[68]

Note that an art work does not just stand for an idea, in the way that a word signifies its meaning. An art work embodies its idea or content in the very 'way it presents itself to the viewer's awareness', in 'the way the work is organized'.[69] An art work thus invites us not only to discern the meaning it embodies, but also to consider how it embodies that meaning and whether it does so successfully.

Danto states that the difference between an art work and its indiscernible counterpart is that the former is 'transfigured' by the idea or meaning it embodies.[70] Such transfiguration does not, however, transform the *appearance* of the object concerned: an object interpreted as an art work 'remains, as the skies, invariant under transformation'.[71] Objects transfigured into art thus look no different from their untransfigured counterparts. An art work embodies an idea in its material constitution, but that material constitution does not reveal *that* it is the embodiment of an idea. Nothing about an art work makes it evident to the eyes (or to the ears) that it has been transfigured by thought.

That something is a work of art can be discerned, therefore, only by *interpretation*, which is an activity of thought, rather than perception. Such

interpretation is carried out, Danto claims, by members of the 'art world', that is, by artists, critics, collectors and curators.[72] Members of the art world do not, however, just declare things to be art works 'by fiat'. Interpretation, as Danto conceives it, is based on reasons that are open to public scrutiny and debate.[73] It is important to note, too, that interpretation à la Danto pays close attention to the ways in which meaning is materially embodied in art works, the ways in which works of art '*show* what they are about'.[74] We cannot see from the material make-up of the object *that* it is a work of art, but once we discover this through interpretation we can then examine how – and how successfully – the meaning is embodied in the work. Interpretation requires not just pure thought, therefore, but '*visual thinking*' or '*interpretive seeing*'.[75] Danto demonstrates his own impressive ability to pay subtle attention to the material specificity of art works in the critical essays he writes for *The Nation* from 1984 onwards.

Impressive though Danto's interpretive practice is, however, there is a certain circularity to his philosophy of art: for the art work – Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* – which shows that interpretation is necessary to recognise something as an art work, is itself judged to be an art work in the first place by *interpretation*. To someone who doubts whether *Brillo Boxes* is a true work of art, and who is also unconvinced that there is no visual difference between art works and ordinary objects, Danto's position will thus look circular and dogmatic.[76]

## IV. Danto on the 'end of art'

Danto points out that his understanding of art as 'embodied meaning' is similar to Hegel's conception of art as the expression of 'spirit'.[77] Yet he was prompted to develop his philosophy of art by Pop art, not by Hegel. He acknowledges, however, that he is indebted to Hegel for the idea that, with the posing of the proper philosophical question about art, *art comes to an end*.[78] He clearly does not mean by this that art *dies* around 1964 and is thereafter no longer produced. His claim is that the story of art's development comes to an end; and, as he makes clear, it is 'consistent with the story coming to an end that everyone should live happily ever after', and that art after the end of art should continue to be 'extremely vital'.[79]

In Danto's view, the story of art – in which painting is the leading, but not the only, character[80] – began with the early Renaissance in the fourteenth century. There was, of course, art before that time, but, Danto argues (drawing on Hans Belting), such art served a religious, rather than a

distinctively artistic, purpose. With the Renaissance, however, 'the concept of the artist became central' and 'something like aesthetic considerations began to govern our relationships to [works of art]'. At this point, Danto contends, the story of art as a distinctive practice began. All art, for Danto, whether religious or not, is the embodiment of meaning or an idea. From the period of the Renaissance, however, art gave itself a further aim that set it apart from religion, namely, 'to be mimetic: to imitate an external reality, actual or possible'.[81]

Following Giorgio Vasari, Danto notes that this aim of Renaissance art gave rise to a history in which it was fulfilled more and more adequately. Each stage in that history was made necessary *by* the aim of mastering visual appearances, and that history reached its own internally defined endpoint when such mastery was finally achieved (in Vasari's view, by Michelangelo). The production of art did not simply stop at that point, but all that remained to be achieved after Michelangelo was 'the refinement of skills' already learned.[82]

Modernist artists, Danto maintains, rejected this Renaissance conception of art to a greater or lesser degree. Two events in particular were responsible, in his view, for the Modernist turn in Western art in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first was the perception, by artists such as Van Gogh and Gauguin, of the artistic merit of non-Western art (in particular, Japanese prints), which profoundly undermined the authority of the Renaissance ideal of mimetic perfection.[83] The second was the slightly later 'advent of motion-picture technology': for the rise of cinema 'meant that the capacity for illusion had passed entirely outside the hands of painters, forcing them either to rethink the nature of painting or simply to become outmoded'.[84]

By rejecting the Renaissance conception of art, Modernist artists found themselves seeking, or advocating, a new role for art. They did not agree on what that role should be, but they shared a common desire to define or discover 'the essence and nature of art' now that the Renaissance ideal had been overthrown, and to defend their own conception of that essence against their Modernist rivals. As Danto puts it, therefore, the question '"What is an art work?" became part of every art work belonging to the Modernist era, and each such art work advanced itself as a kind of answer.'[85]

In the past this question concerned philosophers, such as Hegel.[86] Modernist art, however, raised and answered this question itself. Such art was thus now 'doing philosophy, so to speak, in the medium of art'. This explains, Danto contends, why Modernism so often took the form of issuing

*manifestos*.[87] Yet, in becoming philosophical, Modernist artists did not cease being artists: they not only produced manifestos, but also created 'art that embodies the philosophical essence of art'.[88] In that sense they still believed that the essence of art can be made clear through examples, that one can *show* what art truly is in the works one creates.

In Danto's view, the shared aim of seeking the essence of art generated a distinctive history of Modernism with its own internal dynamic. The course of that history was determined by the idea that art's essence would come to light only if one were to strip away those features of art works that are contingent and inessential. Accordingly, successive Modernist movements subtracted from the essence of art what previous movements had taken to belong to it. The history of Modernism's search for the essence of art is thus, for Danto, the process of continual *subtraction* and *erasure* – the 'history of erasures from the concept of art of what had been assumed to be art's defining conditions'. As Danto writes:

> Art did not have to be beautiful; it need make no effort to furnish the eye with an array of sensations equivalent to what the real world would furnish it with; need not have a pictorial subject; need not deploy its forms in pictorial space; need not be the magical product of the artist's touch. All these subtractions were achieved over the course of decades.[89]

The logical conclusion of this process is the eventual erasure of *every manifest feature* of an art work from the essence of art. The corollary of this is the idea that the essence of art – whatever that should prove to be – does not require art to look any particular way: art does not have to look Cubist, or Fauvist or Abstract Expressionist. This, in turn, means that art works can look exactly like things that are not art works. This, as we saw above, is what happens in Pop art (and Minimalism). Superficially, the art of Warhol and Lichtenstein looks conservative and seems to aim merely at the perfect imitation of objects in the world. Danto insists, however, that Pop art and Minimalism are in fact the culmination of the process of *erasure* that characterises the history of Modernism.[90]

Modernist art works implicitly ask 'what is the essence of art?' and offer themselves as exemplary answers: they say '*this* is what true art, art in its essence, looks like'. Warhol's art, as we have seen, poses a different question: it asks 'what makes the difference between an art work and something which is not an art work, *if in fact they look exactly alike?*'.[91] Warhol still asks about the distinctive essence of art, but he poses the question in a way that art

itself cannot answer: because the premise of the question is that there is no visible difference, no difference that *art* can show, between art and non-art. Warhol's question must, therefore, be answered by *philosophy*.[92]

Pop art and Minimalism thus bring Modernism to a close by handing the task of defining the essence of art to philosophy. Philosophy, in turn, is forced to seek a purely conceptual – and so properly philosophical – definition of art without the help of examples drawn from art. In Danto's view, therefore, 'art has been able, through its evolution, to take us to the heart of its philosophy', and, in so doing, to liberate philosophy from dependence on art itself.[93]

Pop art also liberates *art* from philosophy. Thanks to Pop art, Danto writes, 'artists no longer needed to be philosophers', as they were under Modernism; 'they were liberated, having handed the problem of the nature of art over to philosophy, to do what they wanted to'. Indeed, thanks to Pop art, art gained its 'perfect freedom', because the works that made it necessary for philosophy to define the essence of art also ushered in a radical *pluralism* in art itself. [94] Pop art showed that the difference between art and non-art is not discernible visually and so must be a conceptual matter. In so doing, it showed that art can look any way at all, including like ordinary objects that are not art works. Pop art thereby showed that *anything* can be art – provided it embodies meaning for the art world – and with this idea 'perfect artistic freedom had become real'.[95] Pop art thus liberated art *from* philosophy and *to* complete artistic freedom at one and the same time.

In the age of pluralism ushered in by Pop art all styles become available to the artist, including those that were progressively abandoned by Modernism.[96] Art can even imitate reality again or be beautiful, provided that this is connected to the meaning embodied in the work.[97] Since there is now 'no one way art has to be', there is no longer *one* essential aim that art after Pop art must realise.[98] This, in turn, means that contemporary art cannot give rise to a *history* in which what is taken to be the essential aim of art is progressively brought to fruition. Pop art thus not only brings the history of Modernism to an end, but it also brings to an end the very idea that art should develop and progress historically at all. This is not to say that art after Pop art remains immune to changes in the world around us,[99] but that such art does not give rise to a history with an internal dynamic of its own, generated by what is presumed to be *the* aim of art. With Pop art, therefore, we enter the *post-historical* period, in which there are 'no historically mandated directions for art to go in'.[100]

The idea that, after Pop art, art ceases to have a history that is progressive and developmental is, Danto says, 'what I mean by the end of art'.[101] Art

comes to an end, therefore, not by stopping altogether, but by becoming post-historical. Art reaches this end when it enters the age of radical pluralism and makes it apparent that only *philosophy*, and not art itself, is capable of defining the essence of art. In that sense, in Danto's view, 'the end of art consists in the coming to awareness of the true philosophical nature of art'.[102] This idea that 'art ends with the advent of its own philosophy' is, Danto tells us, altogether Hegelian and 'shows how really indebted to his thought mine has been'.[103]

## v. Danto's view of Hegel

As far as I am aware, Danto does not distinguish the three Hegelian senses of the 'end of art', as I have done above. He does not consider Hegel's account of the logical transition from art, via comedy, to religion; nor does he examine in detail Hegel's thoughts on the dissolution of romantic art. What interests Danto is Hegel's broad claim that in the modern age art ceases to be the highest expression of truth and cedes its place to philosophy.

Danto understands Hegel's 'End-of-Art Thesis' to be expressed most forcefully in this statement, quoted above: 'art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past'.[hh,104] In Hegel's view, art fulfilled this vocation in ancient Greece, when it was seen as the most adequate expression of the divine. Those days, however, have gone. Today art no longer expresses the divine, but it 'invites us to thoughtful consideration . . . for the purpose of . . . knowing scientifically what art is'.[ii,105] 'The *science*' – that is, the *philosophy* – 'of art is therefore a greater need in our day than it was in days when art by itself as art yielded full satisfaction'.[jj,106] In this sense, for Hegel as for Danto, 'art ends with the advent of its own philosophy'.[107] Indeed, according to Danto (though I do not share this view), Hegel claims that we now no longer have any real need for art in its own right. Art is still produced and continues to play a role in society, affording recreation and entertainment, but, as such, it is merely a 'luxury' and 'indulgence', not a real spiritual need.[108]

hh. 'Ist und bleibt die Kunst nach der Seite ihrer höchsten Bestimmung für uns ein Vergangenes', Hegel, HW, XIII, 25.

ii. 'Die Kunst lädt uns zur denkenden Betrachtung ein . . . zu dem Zwecke, . . . was die Kunst sei, wissenschaftlich zu erkennen', Hegel, HW, XIII, 26.

jj. 'Die *Wissenschaft* der Kunst ist darum in unserer Zeit noch viel mehr Bedürfnis als zu den Zeiten, in welchen die Kunst für sich als Kunst schon volle Befriedigung gewährte', Hegel, HW, XIII, 25–6.

For Hegel, therefore, art is replaced in the modern age by philosophy, including the philosophy of art, as the primary vehicle of human self-understanding. This reflects the fact, as Danto puts it, that 'Hegel assigns to art a lower station in the realm of Absolute Spirit than philosophy'.[109] The Greeks may have found the profoundest satisfaction in art, but art is by its nature cognitively inferior to philosophy, because it is 'dependent upon having to put its content into some sensory medium',[110] whereas philosophy presents the truth with perfect conceptual clarity.

As we have seen, Danto accepts Hegel's thesis that the history of art culminates in the philosophy of art. He also notes that, for Hegel, art after the end of art is characterised by a profound pluralism; and he insists, rightly and in marked contrast to Adorno, that Hegel is 'one of art criticism's greatest practitioners'.[111] He makes it clear, however, that he *rejects* Hegel's conviction that philosophy is cognitively superior to art.

In Danto's view, this conviction is rooted in Hegel's questionable metaphysical Idealism, which sees 'the universe as spiritual through and through' and views sensuous matter with 'contempt': for this contempt leads Hegel to believe that art is limited 'in a disfiguring way' by its dependence on matter and that the spiritual nature of the universe can be understood fully only by philosophy. Despite his great understanding of art, therefore, Hegel's 'philosophy of art was hostage to his metaphysics', and he continues the philosophical 'disenfranchisement of art' initiated by Plato.[112]

For Danto, philosophy is, indeed, capable of greater *universality* than art, which must always embody its meanings in particular ways in particular works, but it is *not* cognitively superior to, or spiritually more satisfying than, art. Indeed, he claims, 'philosophy is simply hopeless in dealing with the large human issues'. This is especially the case in the second half of the twentieth century, Danto maintains, but it is also true, he thinks, of the great philosophers of the past. 'When I think of those Dutch marriage portraits – or of Van Eyck's portrait of the Arnolfini couple – against what philosophers have said on the topic of marriage', Danto writes, 'I am almost ashamed of my discipline'.[113] In contrast to Hegel, therefore, Danto believes, not that we have 'outgrown' art, but that art is in many ways more important to us now in making sense of our lives than philosophy is.[114] Furthermore, for Danto, *art itself* has been responsible for the progress that has been made in the *philosophy* of art. As we have seen, it was Pop art that made it possible for philosophy – in the person of Danto himself – to understand the universal 'essence' of art to be the embodiment of meaning. 'History could not have

attained this point by philosophical reflection alone', Danto writes; 'it has been entirely internal to the history of art.'[115]

So, although Danto is a 'born-again Hegelian',[116] indebted to Hegel's idea of the end of art, he rejects what he understands to be Hegel's questionable Idealist metaphysics and the conviction derived from it that philosophy is cognitively and spiritually superior to art.[117] What Danto extracts from Hegel's thought is the purely *historical* claim that 'art has been able, through its evolution, to take us to the heart of its philosophy'.[118] With Hegel's help, he then formulates his own thesis that art's history ends with the philosophy of art, because Modernist art leads to the point – in the 1960s – at which it poses a question about itself that only philosophy can answer.[119]

Danto also insists that, thanks to Modernism and Pop art, 'art has certainly outgrown anything Hegel would have been able to conceive of as art in the 1820s'.[120] Despite Hegel's recognition that art after the end of art is pluralistic, he remained, in Danto's view, 'fixated' on the Renaissance paradigm of mimesis and wedded to the idea that all art should be beautiful. It would surprise Hegel, Danto writes, that 'beauty is no longer regarded as a "formal law of art"', and that art is now much more radically pluralistic than he could ever have imagined.[121]

Danto does not indicate whether he thinks that there is any connection between Hegel's retention of the idea of beauty and his 'metaphysical' Idealism. What is clear, however, is that, for Danto, Hegel is not as thoroughly *historical* a thinker as Danto himself. In contrast to Hegel's, we are told, Danto's own 'thesis on the end of art really is not a metaphysical thesis but a historical one'.[122] Hegel could not, of course, have experienced the history of Modernism that so interests Danto; but that is not the principal problem with Hegel's philosophy of art. The principal problem, for Danto, is that Hegel subordinates art and history to a metaphysical philosophy of spirit, rather than letting philosophy, especially the philosophy of art, be determined by art's history itself.[123] We now need to consider whether Danto's own philosophy of art (and of the end of art) is quite as historical and free of metaphysics as he claims it is.

## VI. A Hegelian critique of Danto

In my view, Danto's philosophy of art is not simply grounded in the history of art, because it presupposes a prior – indeed, *a priori* – understanding of what a philosophy of art should be. Danto contends that 'most philosophies of art have been by and large disguised endorsements of the kind of art the

philosophers approved of'. He insists, by contrast, that 'a philosophy of art worthy of the name must be worked out at a level of abstractness so general that you cannot deduce from it the form of any specific style of art'.[124] It is thus not just the history of Modernism that requires a philosophy of art to be general and abstract, but the very nature, or 'name', of philosophy itself.

The concept or 'essence' of art, as philosophy understands it, must itself be something utterly general. That is to say, 'the essence of art must be shared by everything that is an art work, so there is nothing that exhibits this essence more than anything else'.[125] This, in turn, means that, if philosophy understands the essence of art correctly, there can be no possible counter-examples that would call its account of that essence into question. If the philosophy of art is 'a good theory, history cannot overthrow it': it is immune to falsification by the future of art.[126]

Danto writes that a good philosophy of art 'has to fit everything because it means to articulate the very concept of art'.[127] This is not to say, however, that philosophy first defines what belongs to a work of art and then decides whether things in the world are art works according to how well they fit that definition. This can be said, with some qualification, of Hegel,[128] but it is not true of Danto. Danto allows the *art world* to decide whether something is a work of art, and assigns to philosophy the task of defining the essence of art in such a way that it fits everything judged to be an art work by the art world. My claim here, however, is that Danto assumes *a priori* that the true philosophical concept of art must be compatible with *anything* that is judged by the art world to be art. That is to say, Danto assumes that the philosophy of art, which is by nature essentialist, is inseparable from a thoroughgoing *pluralism* in art.[129]

For Danto, pluralism means that anything can be a work of art – provided it embodies meaning for the art world – and, accordingly, that there is no way or set of ways a work of art *has to look*. We learn this, Danto argues, from Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*; but it also follows from the idea that the philosophical definition of art, and, indeed, the essence of art itself, must be utterly *general*. 'There is no way works of art need to look', Danto writes, 'since a philosophical definition of art must be compatible with *every* kind and order of art.'[130] Inevitably, therefore, 'Pluralism falls out as a consequence of a good philosophy of art. A philosophy which had a different outcome would not be good philosophy.'[131]

Danto's celebration of artistic pluralism is thus not just a response to recent developments in the history of art, but it also rests on assumptions he

makes about the philosophy and essence of art. Furthermore, these assumptions reveal Danto to be wedded – despite his indebtedness to Hegel – to what Hegel regards as an abstract and ultimately unsustainable metaphysics.

According to Hegel, 'every educated consciousness has its metaphysics'.[kk,132] Such metaphysics comprises 'the diamond net' (*das diamantene Netz*) of categories that all of us employ to make the world intelligible. There is no escaping such categories, but there are different ways of conceiving of them. One can conceive of them inadequately in the manner of the abstract understanding (*Verstand*) or adequately in the manner of speculative reason (*Vernunft*). Very briefly, the understanding conceives of opposing categories as simply opposed to one another, whereas speculative reason 'grasps the unity of the determinations in their opposition'.[ll,133] Danto's adherence to the standpoint of the understanding can be seen in the way he conceives of the relation between what is universal – the concept or essence of art – and what is particular and specific.

Consider, for example, this remark, already quoted above: 'a philosophy of art worthy of the name must be worked out at a level of abstractness so general that you cannot deduce from it the form of any specific style of art'.[134] This sentence does not merely make a claim about the philosophy of art; it also assumes that the nature of the *general* (or *universal*) is such that one cannot deduce the *specific* from it. This might seem to be an innocuous assumption to make, but from Hegel's point of view it is characteristic of the understanding, since it takes for granted that the truly general *excludes* the specific.

Further evidence of Danto's abstract understanding of concepts can be found in his conception of the 'essence' of art. As we have seen, Danto understands Modernism to be the process in which what is 'inessential' is gradually erased from the concept of art. This process reaches its conclusion when Pop art hands over to the philosophy of art the task of defining art's essence. It is important to note that philosophy's conception of the essence of art – as 'embodied meaning' – presupposes the process of erasure and subtraction carried out by Modernism. The true philosophical conception of the *essence* of art is thus one from which everything deemed *inessential* has been removed. As Danto writes, 'the concept of art had been purged of everything inessential. It would remain for philosophy to say what was left.'[135] From Hegel's point of view, therefore, Danto's conception of essence

kk. 'Jedes gebildete Bewußtsein hat seine Metaphysik', Hegel, HW, IX, 20 (§ 246 addition).

ll. 'Faßt die Einheit der Bestimmungen in ihrer Entgegensetzung auf', Hegel, HW, VIII, 169, 176 (§§ 80, 82).

is the product of '*external* negation' (äußerliche *Negation*), or 'abstraction' (*Abstraktion*), which 'only lifts the determinacies of being *away* from what is left over as essence'.[mm,136] Essence is conceived, in an abstract manner, as the simple *negation* or elimination of what is inessential.

Another example of Danto's adherence to the standpoint of the understanding can be seen in the cornerstone of his philosophy of art, namely, the claim that 'there is no way works of art need to look'.[137] As we have seen, this claim is justified not just by Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, but also by the idea that the true concept of art and the essence of art itself must be wholly general and abstract. For Danto, a truly general concept of art must be compatible with all art, *whatever it might look like*; there is nothing in the concept of art, therefore, that requires art to look any particular way. Yet if there is no way art needs to look, there is no way of looking or appearing that shows a thing to be an art work. That, in turn, means that art works do not *manifest* or *make visible* the fact that they are works of art *in the way they look* (and so they are visually indistinguishable from other objects we can see or imagine that are not art works).[138] For Danto, what makes something a work of art is its being an embodied meaning: this is the *essence* of art. This essence, however, is not apparent in the art work itself: art's essence does not show itself, does not *appear*, in the objects that instantiate it.

In Hegel's view, however, essence understood speculatively, rather than abstractly, is precisely that which appears and manifests itself. Art's essence, properly understood, must, therefore, manifest itself in art works. Indeed, art works are just those things in which art's essence manifests itself. Accordingly, genuine art works *show* that they are works of art in the way they look or sound. It cannot be the case, therefore, that there is no way art works have to look and that they can be visually indistinguishable from ordinary things. Danto finds support for his view in Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, which he considers, without question, to be art. Yet, insofar as these are visually indistinguishable from commercial Brillo boxes, they are, from Hegel's philosophical perspective, at most 'bits of artistry' (*Kunststücke*), not genuine works of *art*, and so cannot establish anything about the true concept or essence of art.

For Danto, philosophy's definition of the essence of art must fit whatever the *art world* deems to be art. For Hegel, by contrast, something counts as genuine art if it fits *philosophy's* conception of art. Yet this does not mean that we actually need philosophy to tell us in every case whether or not the object

mm. 'Hebt die Bestimmtheiten des Seins nur *hinweg* von dem, was als Wesen übrigbleibt', Hegel, HW, VI, 14.

before us is an art work: for, in Hegel's view, art 'in the philosophical sense' *shows itself* to be art. In the case of true art, therefore, it is evident to the eye – or, more precisely, to the mind through the eye – *that* it is art. In this way, Hegel's philosophy of art – and of essence – emancipates art's audience not only from the specialists of the art world, but also from philosophy itself.[139]

This is not the place to provide a detailed account of Hegel's philosophical understanding of 'essence' and 'concept'.[140] It suffices to note that, for Hegel, essence must appear and the concept, or the universal, necessarily determines, particularises and individuates itself.[141] The understanding attempts to keep essence and appearance, or universal and particular, quite distinct from one another, but Hegel claims that they are in truth inseparable from, indeed in a sense identical to, one another in their very difference. This does not mean that there is no real essence of things for Hegel; but there is no essence that does not appear in some way and show itself. As Hegel puts it, 'first, essence *shines within itself* or is *reflection*; second, it *appears*; third, it *reveals* itself'.[nn,142]

Hegel proves these assertions in his *Science of Logic*, but they have obvious relevance for the rest of his philosophy, for they mean that *spirit* – the essence of humanity – must also manifest itself in various ways. As we have seen, spirit finds its most adequate expression in the 'inwardness' of Protestant Christianity and in speculative philosophy. In Hegel's view, however, it must also manifest itself in a *sensuous* manner, and it does so in art.[143] Art, for Hegel, is thus the 'sensuous *appearance* of the Idea' or spirit.[oo,144]

As noted above, the idea that essence must appear means that art's essence (or concept) must manifest itself in art works. Since the essence of art lies in being the *sensuous* appearance of spirit, art works must manifest their essence, and so show themselves to be *art*, in the way they *look* or *sound*. This is the purpose of, for example, poetic language and idealisation in portrait painting: they distinguish the realm of art *visibly* or *audibly* from that of ordinary, prosaic existence.[145] Even in the era of pluralism, when we are no longer bound to the three art forms, Hegel thinks that true art distinguishes itself visibly from everyday objects, and from 'bits of artistry' (*Kunststücke*) that merely imitate such objects. It does so, above all, by being *beautiful*, that is, by displaying, for example, the 'freedom from care' (*Kummerlosigkeit*) that we find in paintings by Murillo or the feeling of freedom, gaiety and 'spiritual cheerfulness' (*geistige Heiterkeit*) that suffuses so much Dutch art.[146]

nn. 'Das Wesen *scheint* zuerst *in sich selbst* oder ist *Reflexion*; zweitens *erscheint* es; drittens *offenbart* es sich', Hegel, HW, VI, 16.

oo. 'Das sinnliche *Scheinen* der Idee', Hegel, HW, XIII, 151.

The reason Hegel insists that contemporary art should still be beautiful, therefore, is not that his taste is conservative, but that he believes that true art is the sensuous appearance of spirit's freedom and must show itself to be such; and he believes this because he believes that, logically, *essence must appear*.[147]

Danto rejects what he understands to be Hegel's questionable metaphysics, and he may reject Hegel's 'speculative' understanding of concepts, such as 'essence', as metaphysical, too; I do not know. It is important to note, however, that, from Hegel's own point of view, his understanding of categories is not based on questionable assumptions, but is derived in a science of logic that is radically *self-critical* and *presuppositionless* in the sense that, at the outset, it takes nothing for granted about the categories it examines. Hegel's logic does not presuppose (as Danto's does) that 'essence' is distinct from 'appearance', but nor does it simply *presuppose* that essence must appear. His logic starts with the most minimal and indeterminate concept conceivable, namely, 'pure being', and derives all further categories, including 'essence' and 'appearance', from that indeterminate beginning. The claim that essence must appear is thus proven in the course of Hegel's science of logic on the basis of *no* prior assumptions about the categories. Critics of Hegel, from Schelling and Feuerbach to Heidegger and Adorno, have claimed that he takes much more for granted in his logic and philosophy as a whole than he admits. In my view, however, these critics are mistaken and the presuppositionless character of Hegel's logic needs to be taken seriously.[148]

It is in this light, too, that we must consider Hegel's claim that philosophy is cognitively superior to art. This claim is, indeed, rooted in Hegel's account of spirit; but that account of spirit is, in turn, rooted in Hegel's self-critical, presuppositionless logic. It is not, therefore, an account that can be simply cast off as 'metaphysical' or as 'disenfranchising art', as Danto thinks, but one that emerges from Hegel's *unprejudiced* understanding of logic, nature and spirit.

It is not possible here to provide further support for my interpretation of Hegel's thought. All I wish to highlight is the fact that, from a Hegelian point of view, Danto's philosophy of art rests on unquestioned, and indeed logically unsustainable, assumptions about 'essence' and the essence of art in particular. Danto assumes that we reach the essence of art by subtracting all that is deemed inessential, and that art's essence does not manifest itself in art works themselves. From Hegel's point of view, therefore, Danto looks like an old-fashioned metaphysician of the understanding.[149]

I am aware that, in comparison with that of Danto, Hegel's account of art in modernity looks hopelessly conservative. Yet Danto's radically pluralistic attitude to contemporary art itself rests on what is, to Hegelian eyes, a profoundly conservative and inadequate conception of 'essence'. Danto maintains that a truly general concept of art's essence must be compatible with all art, *whatever it looks like*. This means that, for Danto, art's essence does not require art to look any particular way, that it makes no *visible* difference to the way art works look. This, in turn, means that art's essence does not make itself visible, does not *appear* for all to see, in works of art. Yet here lies the problem: for after Hegel's proof that essence *must* appear, the idea that essence does *not* appear is no longer sustainable; nor can Danto sustain the associated, radically pluralistic, idea that art can look any way at all and still be art.

Danto is greatly indebted to Hegel's account of the 'end of art', as he understands it, and he clearly welcomes the impact that Hegel's thought has had on his own thinking. Yet Danto has not felt the full impact of Hegel's conception of essence, concept or spirit. Consequently, he fails to grasp the challenge that Hegel's ideas pose to his own abstractly essentialist philosophy and to the radical artistic pluralism that such essentialism makes necessary. But, of course, in failing to appreciate the challenge posed by Hegel's thought to his own philosophical assumptions, Danto is by no means alone.

## Notes

1. For a discussion of both Heidegger and Adorno in the context of Hegel's idea of the 'end of art', see Eva Geulen, *Das Ende der Kunst: Lesarten eines Gerüchts nach Hegel* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2002).
2. Arthur C. Danto, *Beyond the Brillo Box: the visual arts in post-historical perspective* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 9 [hereafter BBB].
3. For a more extended discussion of this topic, see Stephen Houlgate, 'Hegel and the "end" of art', *The Owl of Minerva* 29(1) (Autumn 1997), 1–21. See also Stephen Bungay, *Beauty and Truth: a study of Hegel's aesthetics* (Oxford University Press, 1984), 71–89.
4. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, 20 vols. (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1969–71), xv, 572 [hereafter HW]; G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: lectures on fine art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) [hereafter Knox], II, 1236.
5. Knox, II, 1236.
6. On the centrality of the idea of 'letting go' to Hegel's understanding of Christianity in particular, see Stephen Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel: freedom, truth and history*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 256–60 [hereafter IH].

7. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie der Kunst oder Ästhetik*, eds. Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert and Bernadette Collenberg-Plotnikov (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2004), 151 [hereafter PKA]. [All translations from PKA by SH]
8. Knox, I, 602 [translation revised SH].
9. Hegel, HW, XIV, 229–30; *A*, I, 600–2; VPK, 202.
10. Knox, I, 603.
11. Knox, I, 601 [translation revised SH].
12. Hegel has in mind, among others, the dramatists August von Kotzebue and August Wilhelm Iffland, and the painter, Balthasar Denner; see HW, XIV, 224–5, XV, 63; Knox, I, 597, II, 834.
13. See Hegel, HW, XIII, 64–7; Knox, I, 41–4.
14. See Arthur C. Danto, *Encounters and Reflections: art in the historical present* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1990), 338–40 [hereafter ER]; Arthur C. Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty: aesthetics and the concept of art* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2003), 44 [hereafter AB].
15. See, for example, HW, XIII, 14; Knox, I, 2: 'beauty *born of the spirit and born again*' ('*die* aus dem Geiste geborene und wiedergeborene *Schönheit*').
16. Hegel, HW, XIII, 66–9; Knox, I, 43–5; PKA, 9.
17. Hegel, HW, XIV, 220; Knox, I, 593–4.
18. For an overview of the art forms, see Hegel, *HW*, XIII, 106–14; Knox, I, 75–81.
19. Knox, I, 605 [translation revised SH].
20. Knox, I, 605.
21. For Danto's views on modern pluralism, see, for example, BBB, 9, 225.
22. Knox, I, 605.
23. Hegel, HW, XIII, 110, XIV, 21; Knox, I, 78, 433.
24. Knox, I, 607 [translation revised SH]. The term '*Humanus*' is taken from Goethe's poem, 'Die Geheimnisse'; see Martin Donougho, 'Remarks on "Humanus heißt der Heilige . . . "', *Hegel-Studien* 17 (1982), 214–25. Note that Hegel believes even art that does not directly depict human beings, such as music and landscape painting, gives expression to human spirit and emotion; see HW, XV, 25–6, 60, 135; Knox, II, 804, 831–2, 891.
25. Knox, I, 243.
26. Knox, I, 243 [translation revised SH].
27. Knox, I, 170. See Houlgate, IH, 214–17.
28. Knox, I, 169–70.
29. Knox, I, 607 [translation revised SH].
30. Knox, I, 10.
31. Hegel, HW, XIII, 141; Knox, I, 102–3.
32. Hegel, HW, XIII, 25; Knox, I, 11.
33. Knox, I, 7.
34. See, for example, Hegel, HW, XIII, 140–1; Knox, I, 102.
35. Knox, I, 80 [translation revised SH], 83.
36. Knox, I, 520.
37. See Hegel, HW, XV 45; Knox, II, 819.
38. Hegel, HW, XII, 491–2; G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 412–13 [hereafter PH].
39. See Hegel, HW, XIV, 195–6, XV, 211 (on J. S. Bach); Knox, I, 573, II, 950.

40. Hegel, HW, XIII, 24, 142; Knox, I, 10, 103 [translation revised SH].
41. Knox, I, 598.
42. Hegel, HW, XIII, 24–5; Knox, I, 10 [translation revised SH].
43. PH, 417–18 [translation revised SH].
44. See Hegel, HW, XII, 519–20; PH, 438–9.
45. Knox, I, 10; PKA, 8.
46. Knox, I, 11.
47. Knox, I, 11 [translation revised SH].
48. See Hegel, HW, XIII, 25–6; Knox, I, 11.
49. Knox, I, 10.
50. Knox, I, 11.
51. Arthur C. Danto, *Unnatural Wonders: essays from the gap between art and life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 11 [hereafter UW].
52. Knox, I, 103. Hegel recognises, by the way, that art can fulfil many different functions, including recreation, entertainment and decoration; but he thinks that the proper function of art – even in modernity when art no longer fulfils its *highest* vocation – is to give expression to spiritual freedom in the form of beauty. See Hegel, HW, XIII, 20, XIV 235; Knox, I, 7, 605.
53. Danto, BBB, 6, 9.
54. Danto, UW, 12, and BBB, 5.
55. Danto, BBB, 40, and Arthur C. Danto, *The Madonna of the Future: essays in a pluralistic art world* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000), xxiii [hereafter MF].
56. Danto, BBB, 36, and Arthur C. Danto, *Andy Warhol* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 59–66 [hereafter AW].
57. Danto, BBB, 3–4.
58. *Ibid.*, 5, 225.
59. Danto, MF, xxviii–xxix (emphasis added). See also Arthur C. Danto, *The State of the Art* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1987), 209 [hereafter SA]: 'the answer had to come from philosophy'.
60. Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art: contemporary art and the pale of history* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 125 [hereafter AEA]. One might think that the same could be said of Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades, produced fifty years before Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, and at times Danto describes Duchamp's achievement in ways that make it very hard to distinguish it from Warhol's; see Arthur C. Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 152, 169 [hereafter PDA]. At other times, however, Danto suggests that the principal purpose of Duchamp's ready-mades, in contrast to Warhol's work, is not to eliminate the visual distinction between artworks and things that are not artworks, but to show that art can be made from things that are not *beautiful* and, indeed, have 'nothing *aesthetic* to recommend them' at all; see Danto, AEA, 84, and MF, xi (emphasis added). On the differences between Duchamp and Warhol, see also Danto, AEA, 132, and AW, 56, 66.
61. Danto, AEA, 125, and BBB, 7.
62. Danto, MF, xxii, and Arthur C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: a philosophy of art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 31–2, 42 [hereafter TC].
63. Danto, UW, 10, and AEA, 195.

64. Danto, PDA, 179.
65. Danto, AB, 66.
66. Danto, UW, xii.
67. Danto, AEA, 84.
68. Danto, UW, 18.
69. *Ibid.*, 10, and AB, 139.
70. See, for example, Danto, AEA, 128, 130.
71. Danto, TC, 125.
72. See Arthur C. Danto, 'The artworld', *Journal of Philosophy* 61(19) (1964), 571–84.
73. Danto, BBB, 39–41, 52.
74. Danto, MF, xx.
75. Danto, UW, 360–1, and BBB, 45.
76. Danto himself notes that some members of the art world at the time thought that Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* were not art. See BBB, 37.
77. Arthur C. Danto, *Embodied Meanings: critical essays and aesthetic meditations* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1994), xii [hereafter EM], and AB, 12–13. For Hegel, however, the fact that genuine art is the expression of spirit or the Idea (*Idee*), rather than just 'some meaning or other' (*irgendeine Bedeutung*), is important; see Hegel, HW, XIII, 105; Knox, I, 74.
78. Danto, BBB, 6, and AEA, 30–1.
79. Danto, EM, 324, AEA, 154, and ER, 334–5.
80. Danto, EM, 12.
81. Danto, AEA, 3, 46, and ER, 338–40. For Hegel, as we saw above, it is the Reformation, rather than the Renaissance, that plays the decisive role in the story of art's gradual emancipation from religion.
82. Danto, MF, 416–19.
83. Danto, BBB, 125.
84. Danto, ER, 340.
85. Danto, SA, 204, and MF, 423.
86. See, for example, Hegel, HW, XIII, 44–64; Knox, I, 25–41.
87. Danto, ER, 333, and AEA, 67.
88. Danto, AEA, 36.
89. Danto, BBB, 4.
90. See, for example, Danto, SA, 9.
91. Danto, AEA, 125 (emphasis added).
92. Danto, BBB, 8.
93. Danto, UW, 7.
94. Danto, BBB, 225, and UW, 16.
95. Danto, BBB, 9.
96. Danto, AEA, 5.
97. Danto, EM, 13, and AB, 101–2, 122.
98. Danto, AEA, 34. This does not mean that art loses *all raison d'être*; rather it is returned to 'the serving of largely human ends', which are many and various (SA 217, and BBB 10). The art world thus becomes 'a field of possibilities and permissibilities in which nothing is necessary and nothing is obliged' (EM, 327).

99. See Danto, AEA, 198: 'one does not escape the constraints of history by entering the post-historical period'.
100. Danto, EM, 328.
101. Danto, MF, 430.
102. Danto, AEA, 30.
103. Danto, PDA, 107, and UW, 13.
104. Knox, I, 11. See Arthur C. Danto, 'Hegel's End-of-Art Thesis', in D. E. Wellbery and J. Ryan (eds.), *A New History of German Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 535.
105. Knox I, 11 [translation revised SH].
106. Knox, I, 11 [translation revised SH]. See Danto, UW, 5.
107. Danto, PDA, 107.
108. Danto, UW, 11.
109. Danto, AEA, 195.
110. Danto, AB, 118.
111. Danto, UW, 4. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. R. Hullot-Kentor (London: Athlone, 1997), 334: 'Hegel and Kant were the last who, to put it bluntly, were able to write major aesthetics without understanding anything about art.'
112. Danto, UW, 6–7, and PDA, 7, 15–16.
113. Danto, AB, 137.
114. Danto, UW, 6, 8.
115. Danto, MF, 428.
116. Danto, BBB, 9.
117. Presumably, Danto would also reject Hegel's view that religion, especially Christianity, is spiritually superior to art: for, in contrast to Hegel, Danto thinks that 'religion is in its nature exclusivist and intolerant'; see Danto, BBB, 222. For an account of Hegel's rather more nuanced and insightful understanding of religion, see Houlgate, IH, 242–75.
118. Danto, UW, 7.
119. Danto, EM, 12.
120. Danto, UW, 7.
121. Danto, AB, 44, and 'Hegel's End-of-Art Thesis', 539.
122. Danto, UW, 7.
123. In *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, Danto suggests that the history of art is itself one in which art has been disenfranchised by philosophy (see xv, 81, 128). Yet Danto rejects the idea that there is any *metaphysical* ground to this history driving it forward to philosophical self-consciousness. At the level of what he calls 'surface history' (19), it is the internal evolution of *art* that leads to the emergence of the true philosophy of art (see 204: art 'becomes a force in history'). Indeed, in Danto's subsequent texts, the idea that art, throughout its history, has been disenfranchised by *philosophy* appears to give way altogether to the idea that the true philosophy of art is itself the product of, and so dependent on, the *history* of art. Horowitz and Huhn seem to miss this subtle shift in emphasis when they suggest, without further qualification, that, for Danto, art's historical search for self-definition is *imposed* on art by its philosophical 'disenfranchisers'; see Gregg Horowitz and Tom Huhn (Critical Introduction), 'The wake of art: criticism,

philosophy and the ends of taste', in Arthur C. Danto, *The Wake of Art: criticism, philosophy and the ends of taste* (Amsterdam: G+B Arts, 1998), 25, 27.

124. Danto, BBB, 229–30.
125. Danto, EM, 13.
126. Danto, BBB, 230, and ER, 344.
127. Danto, EM, 11.
128. On Hegel's *a priori* method in the philosophies of right and nature, see Hegel, HW, VII, 31–2 (§ 2 remark), and HW, IX, 15 (§ 246 remark); but for the qualifications that apply in aesthetics, see HW, XIII, 26; Knox, I, 11–12.
129. Danto, BBB, 230.
130. Danto, AEA, 36 (emphasis added).
131. Danto, BBB, 230, and AEA, 197.
132. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature: being part two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830), trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 11.
133. G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline, Part I: science of logic*, eds. and trans. K. Brinkmann and D. O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 126, 132 [hereafter Encyclopaedia I].
134. Danto, BBB, 229–30.
135. Danto, UW, 15.
136. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, ed. and trans. G. di Giovanni (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 338 [hereafter SL] [translation revised SH].
137. Danto, AEA, 36.
138. Or, in the case of music or poetry, aurally indistinguishable.
139. On the need for art to be 'clear and apprehensible for us without wide learning' (*ohne breite Gelehrsamkeit klar und erfaßbar*), see Hegel, HW, XIII, 353; Knox, I, 273.
140. For more detailed studies of Hegel's treatment of these concepts, see Stephen Houlgate, 'Essence, reflexion, and immediacy in Hegel's *Science of Logic*', in Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur (eds.), *A Companion to Hegel* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 139–58; Stephen Houlgate, 'Why Hegel's concept is not the essence of things', in David Gray Carlson (ed.), *Hegel's Theory of the Subject* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 19–29.
141. Hegel, HW, VI, 124, 273–4; SL, 418, 529–30.
142. SL, 339. See also HW, XIII, 21; Knox, I, 8.
143. See, for example, Hegel, PKA, 3, 30, 33.
144. Knox, I, 111. Note that the phrase quoted here refers explicitly to the 'Idea' (*Idee*), rather than spirit. The Idea, for Hegel, is reason or the 'logos'. It is found in nature, but becomes conscious of itself as 'spirit' (*Geist*). Spirit is thus itself 'the Idea returning back to itself from otherness', that is, from its immersion in nature ([*die*] *Idee, die aus ihrem Anderssein in sich zurückkehrt*) (Hegel, HW, VIII, 64 [§ 18]; Encyclopaedia I, 46).
145. Hegel, HW, XIII, 205–6, XV, 105, 283–4; Knox, I, 155, II 867, 1007; VPK, 278.
146. Hegel, HW, XIII, 223–4; Knox, I, 170.
147. Hegel differs significantly from Schiller in this respect. For Schiller, beautiful things merely *appear* to be free, whereas, for Hegel, beauty is the sensuous appearance and manifestation *of* freedom itself. See Stephen Houlgate, 'Schiller and the Dance of Beauty', *Inquiry* 51(1) (February 2008), 45–7.

148. For a detailed study and defence of Hegel's 'presuppositionless' logic, see Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic: from being to infinity* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2006).
149. In my view, Danto's method of imagining indiscernible counterparts to every work of art (see MF, xxii; PDA, 172) is also evidence of his reliance on *abstraction*, and thus on the understanding, in his philosophy of art, but further development of this thought will have to wait for another occasion.

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# Index